A YEAR'S HOUSEKEEPING IN SOUTH AFRICA.

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A YEAR'S HOUSEKEEPING IN SOUTH AFRICA.

BY

LADY BARKER,

AUTHOR OF "STATION LIFE IN NEW ZEALAND," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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CONTENTS.

LETTER I.

PAGE

CAPE TOWN

LETTER II.

ALONG THE COAST 22

LETTER III.

FAIR NATAL 42

LETTER IV.

FIRST DAYS 53

LETTER V.

TURNING A SOD 80

LETTER VI.

PLAY AND BUSINESS 101

LETTER VII.

THE KAFIR AT HOME 112

LETTER VIII.

AFRICAN WEATHER AND AFRICAN SCENERY 131

LETTER IX.

ZULU WITCHES AND WITCH-FINDERS 160

LETTER X.

PAGE

KAFIR MISSIONS AND MISSIONARIES 191

LETTER XI

A BAZAAR AND A PICNIC IN AFRICA 221

LETTER XII.

KAFIR WEDDINGS AND KAFIR KRAALS 250

LETTER XIII.

REGULARS AND VOLUNTEERS 281

LETTER XIV.

AN EXPEDITION INTO THE BUSH 307

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

To face page

WITCH DOCTORS (From a Photograph by Staunton) *Front.*

"LANGALIBALELE" 18

"TOM" 66

SIR GARNET 69

INDUNA AND FAMILY ON THE "TREK" 121

A KAFIR DANDY 138

HEAD-DRESS OF A WITCHFINDER 179

WITCHFINDER DETECTING A THIEF 180

SUNDAY AT EDENDALE 197

A YEAR'S HOUSEKEEPING IN SOUTH AFRICA.

LETTER I.

CAPE TOWN.

October 16, 1875.

SAFE,—safe at last, after twenty-three days of nothing but sea and sky, of white-crested waves, which made no secret of their intention of coming on board whenever they could, or of tossing the good ship *Edinburgh Castle* hither and thither, like a child's plaything—and of more deceitful, sluggish, rolling billows, looking tolerably calm to the unseafaring eye, but containing a vast amount of heaving power beneath their slow, undulating water-hills and valleys. Sometimes sky and sea have been steeped in dazzling haze of golden glare; sometimes brightened to blue of a sapphire depth.

Again, a sudden change of wind has driven up serried clouds from the south and east, and all has been grey and cold and restful to eyes wearied with radiance and glitter of sun and sparkling water

tions when, a couple of hours later, he demands permission to get *out* of his delicious little white bed that he may have the pleasure of getting *into* it over again!

The evening closes in cold and raw, and the new picture is all blurred and soft and indistinct, and nothing seems plain except the kindly grace of our welcome and the never-before-sufficiently-appreciated delights of space and silence.

October 17.

How pleasant is the process familiarly known as "looking about one," especially when performed under exceptionally favourable circumstances! A long day commenced with a stroll through the Botanic Gardens, parallel with which runs, on one side, a splendid oak avenue, just now in all the vivid freshness of its young spring foliage. The Gardens are beautifully kept, and are valuable as affording a sort of experimental nursery, in which new plants and trees can be brought up on trial, and their adaptability to the soil and climate ascertained. The flora of the Cape Colony is exceptionally varied and beautiful; one peculiarity, incidentally alluded to by my charming guide, struck me as very noticeable: it is that in this dry climate and porous soil all the efforts of uncultivated nature are devoted to the *stems* of the vegetation. On their sap-retaining power depends the life of the plant; so blossom and leaf, though exquisitely indicated, are fragile and

incomplete compared to the solidity and bulbous appearance of the stalk. Everything is sacrificed to the practical principle of keeping life together; and it is not until these stout-stemmed plants are cultivated and duly sheltered and watered, and can grow (as it were) with confidence, that they are able to do justice to the inherent beauty of pencilled petal and veined leaf. Then the stem contracts to ordinary dimensions, and leaf and blossom expand into a joy to the botanist's eyes.

A thousand times during that shady saunter I envied my companions their scientific acquaintance with these beautiful green things of earth, and that intimate knowledge of a subject which enhances one's appreciation of its charms as much as bringing a lamp into a darkened picture gallery. There are the treasures of form and colour; but from ignorant eyes more than half their charms and wonders are holden back.

A few steps beyond the Garden stands the Library and Natural History Museum. The former is truly a credit to the Colony. Spacious, handsome, rich in literary treasures, it would bear comparison with similar institutions in far older and wealthier places. But I have often noticed in colonies how much importance is attached to the possession of a good public library; and how fond, as a rule, colonists are of books. In a new settlement other shops may be ill supplied, but there is always a good bookseller's, and all the books are to be bought there at pretty nearly the same prices

as in England. Here each volume costs precisely the same as it would in London; and it would puzzle ever so greedy a reader to name a book which would not be instantly handed to him. The Museum is well worth a visit of many more hours than we could afford minutes; and, as might be expected, contains numerous specimens of the great "*bok*" family, whose tapering horns and slender legs are to be seen at every turn of one's head. Models are there also of the largest diamonds, and especially well copied is the famous "Star of South Africa," a magnificent brilliant of purest water, sold here originally for something like £12,000, and resold for double that sum three or four years back. But it is often necessary to pretend that a really fine Cape diamond has come from Brazil to ensure it fetching anything like its value, and in that way even jewellers themselves have been known to buy, and give a good price too, for stones they would otherwise have looked upon with suspicion. I have seen lately a straw-coloured diamond from "De Toit's Pan," in the Diamond Fields, cut in Amsterdam and set in London, which could hold its own for purity, radiance, and colour, against any other stone of the same rare tint, without fear or favour; but of course such gems are not common, and fairly good diamonds cost nearly as much here as in any other part of the world.

The light morning mists from the dampness of yesterday have rolled gradually away, and by mid-day the Table-cloth, as the colonists affectionately call the

white, fleece-like vapour, which so often rests on their pet mountain, has been folded up, and laid aside in cloudland for future use. I don't know what picture other people may have made to their own minds of the shape and size of Table Mountain, but it was quite a surprise, and the least little bit in the world of a disappointment to me, to find that it cuts the sky (and what a beautiful sky it is!) with a perfectly straight and level line A gently undulating foreground, broken into ravines where patches of glittering green "velts" or fields, clumps of trees and early settlers' houses nestle cosily down, guides the eye half way up the mountain. There the rounder forms abruptly cease, and great granite cliffs rise, bare and straight,—straight up to the level line, stretching ever so far along. "It is so characteristic," and "You grow to be so fond of that mountain," are observations I have heard made in reply to the carping criticism of travellers; and already I begin to understand the meaning of the phrases.

But you need to see the mountain from various points of view, and under differing influences of sun and cloud, before you can take in its striking and peculiar charms. On each side of the straight line which is emphatically Table Mountain, but actually forming part of it, is a bold headland of the shape one is usually accustomed to see in mountains. The "Devil's Peak" is uncompromising enough for any one's taste, whilst the "Lion's Head" charms the eye by its bluff forms and deep purple fissures.

These grand promontories are not, however, half so beloved by Cape colonists as their own Table Mountain ; and it is curious and amusing to notice how the influence of this odd, straight ridge ever before their eyes, seems to have unconsciously guided and influenced their architectural tastes. All the roofs of the houses are straight—straight as the mountain · a gable is almost unknown, and even the few steeples are dwarfed to an imperceptible departure from the level line. The very trees which shade the Parade Ground, and border the road in places, have their tops as absolutely straight and flat as though giant shears had trimmed them ; but I must confess —in spite of a natural anxiety to carry out my theory —that the violent "sou'-easters" are the straighteners in their case.

Cape Town is so straggling that it is difficult to form any idea of its real size, but the low houses seem neat, and the streets look quaint and lively enough to my new eyes this morning. There are plenty of people moving about with a sociable business-like air. Lots of differing shades of black and brown, Malays with pointed hats on the men's heads, whilst the women encircle their dusky, smiling faces with a gay cotton handkerchief, and throw another of a still brighter hue over their shoulders. When you add to this that they wear a full, flowing, stiffly-starched cotton gown of a third bright colour, you can, perhaps, form some idea of how they enliven the streets. Swarms of children everywhere, romping

and laughing, and showing their white teeth in broadest of grins. The children strike me at once as looking marvellously well. Such chubby cheeks, such sturdy, fat legs, and all, black or white, with that amazing air of independence peculiar to baby-colonists. Nobody seems to mind them, and nothing seems to harm them. Here are half-a-dozen tiny boys, shouting and laughing, at one side of the road, and half-a-dozen baby girls at the other (they all seem to play separately); they are all driving each other, for "horses" is the one game here. By the side of a pond sit two toddlers of about three years old, in one garment apiece, and pointed hats. They are very busy with string and a pin: but who is taking care of them, and why don't they tumble in? They are as fat as ortolans, and grin at us in the most friendly fashion. We must remember that this chances to be the very best moment of the whole year in which to see the Cape and the dwellers thereat. The cold weather has left its bright roses on the children's cheeks, and the winter rains have made every blade of grass and leaf of tree to laugh and sing in freshest green. After the dry windy summer I am assured that there is hardly a leaf and never a blade of grass to be seen in all Cape Town, and only a little straggling verdure hidden away quite under the shelter of the mountain. The great want of the place is water. No river, no brook refreshes one's eye for many and many a league inwards. The necessary water for the use of the town is brought down by pipes from the

numerous springs which trickle out of the granite cliffs, but there is never a sufficiency to spare for watering roads or grass-plots. This scarcity is a double loss to residents and visitors, for one misses it both for use and beauty.

Everybody who comes here rides or drives, they say, round the "Kloof." That may be, but what I maintain is that very few do it so delightfully as I did this sunny afternoon, with a companion who knew and loved every turn of the romantic road, who could tell me the name of every strange bush or flower, of every distant stretch of hills, and help me to make a map in my head of the stretching landscape and curving bay.

Ah, how delicious it all was! The winding, climbing road at whose every angle a fresh, fair landscape fell away from beneath our feet; or a shiny stretch of sea, whose transparent green and purple shadows broke in fringe of feathery spray at the foot of bald rocky cliffs, or crept up to a smooth expanse of silver strand in a soft curling line of foam. "Kloof" means simply "cleft," and is the Pass between the Table Mountain and the "Lion's Head." The road first rises, rises, rises until one seems half way up the great mountain, and the little straight-roofed, white houses, the green "velts" or fields, and the parallel lines of the vine-yards, have sunk below one's feet far, far away.

The mountain gains in grandeur as one approaches it; for the undulating spurs which run from it down to the sea-shore take away from the height, looking

upwards. But when these are left beneath, then the perpendicular walls of granite rising sheer and straight up to the bold sky-line, and the rugged massive strength of the buttress-like cliffs begin to gain something of their true value to the stranger's eye. The most beautiful part of the road, however, to my taste, is the descent, when the shining expanse of Camp's Bay lies shimmering in the warm afternoon sunny haze, with a thousand lights and shadows from cloud and cliff gleaming and glooming over the crisp water surface. By many a steep zig-zag we round the "Lion's Head," and drop down once more on a level road running parallel to the sea-shore, and so home in the balmy and yet bracing twilight. The mid-day sun is not scorching at this time of year, and it is always cool in the shade; but no sooner do the afternoon shadows grow to any length than the air freshens into sharpness, and by sundown one is glad of a good warm shawl.

October 18.

Another bright, ideal day; the morning passed in a delicious flower-filled room, looking over old books and records, and listening to odd quaint little scraps from the old Dutch records. Directly after luncheon, the open brake, with four horses, comes to the door, and we start for a long, lovely drive. Half-a-mile or so takes us out on a flat red road, with Table Mountain rising straight before it, but on the left stretches away a most enchanting panorama. It

is all so soft in colouring and tone, distinct and yet not hard, and exquisitely beautiful. The Blue-Berg range lies beyond the great bay which, unless a "sou'-easter" is tearing over it, lies glowing in tranquil richness, coloured like an Italian lake. Here are lines of chrysoprase green, fringed white with little waves, and beyond lie dark, translucent purple depths changing with every passing cloud. Beyond these amethystic shoals stretches the deep blue water; and beyond, and bluer still, rise the fine ranges of "Hottentot's Holland," which encircle and complete the landscape, bringing the eye round once more to the nearer cliffs of the Devil's Peak.

When the Dutch came here, some two hundred years ago, they seized upon this part of the coast and called it Holland, driving the Hottentots beyond the neighbouring range, telling them "that was to be their Holland," a name it keeps to this day. Their consciences must have troubled them after this arbitrary division of the soil, for up the highest accessible spurs of their own mountain they took the trouble to build several queer little square houses called "block-houses," from which they could keep a sharp look out for foes coming over the hills from the Hottentot's Holland. The foes never came, however, and the roofs and walls of the block-houses have gradually tumbled in, and the gun-carriages,—for they managed to drag some heavy ordnance up the steep hill-side,—have rotted away, whilst the old-fashioned guns lie, grim and rusty, amid a tangled profusion

of wild geranium, heath and lilies. I scrambled up to one of the nearest block-houses and found the date on the dismounted gun to be more than 100 years old.

But to return to our drive. I could gaze and gaze for ever at this lovely panorama, yet I am told this is the least pretty part of the way. The road itself is certainly cloudy with a fine red dust; but this view of sea and distant hills is enchanting. Soon we get under the lee of the great mountain, and beneath its sheltering power splendid oak avenues begin to border the road all the way, whilst miniature forests of straight stemmed pines and shimmering belts of the ghostly "silver tree" run far into the mountain clefts. Stem and leaf are all of silvery white, and when one gets a gleam of sunlight on a distant patch of these trees, the effect is quite indescribable, contrasting as they do with the green of field and vineyard. The vines all about here, and towards "Constantia,"—thirteen miles off,—are dwarf plants, and only grow to the height of gooseberry bushes. It is a particular species which is found to answer best, as requiring less labour to train and cultivate, and is less likely to be blown out of the ground by the violent "sou'-easters," which come sweeping near the mountain. These gales are evidently the greatest annoyance which Cape Colonists have to endure; and although everybody kindly suggests that I "*ought* to see one, just to understand what it is like," I am profoundly thankful that I only

know it from their description, and my own distinct recollection of the New Zealand "nor'-westers." Those were hot winds, scorching and curling up everything; whereas this is rather a cold breeze, although it blows chiefly in summer. It whirls along clouds of penetrating dust from the red clay roads and fields, which dyes the stems and lower branches of the trees a deep brick-dust colour, and I hear moving and pathetic stories of how it ruins clothes, utterly spoiling black silk dresses, and staining white petticoats and children's frocks and pinafores with a border of colour exactly like the ruddle with which sheep are branded. Especially is it the terror of sailors, rendering the navigation along the coast dangerous and difficult, for it blends land and sea into one indistinct whirl of vaporous cloud, confusing and blurring everything, until one cannot distinguish land from water.

The vineyards of "Constantia" originally took their pretty name from the fair daughter of one of the early Dutch Governors; but now it has grown into a generic word; and you see "Cloeté's Constantia," "Van Reybeck's Constantia," written up on great stone gateways, leading by long avenues into the various wine-growing plantations. It was to the former of these "Constantias," which was also the farthest off, that we were bound that pleasant summer afternoon; and from the time we got out of the carriage until the moment we re-entered it—all too soon, but it is a long drive back in the short, cold twilight,—I felt as

though I had stepped through a magic portal into the scene of one of Washington Irving's stories. It was all so simple and homely, so quaint, and so inexpressibly picturesque. The house had stood there for a couple of hundred years, and looks as though it might so stand for ever, with its air of cool, leisurely repose, and comfort and strength. In the flagged hall towers a huge stalactite, some ten feet high, brought a hundred years ago from caves far away in the distant ranges. It is shaped something like a Malay's hat, only the peak tapers to a point about eight feet high. The drawing room—though it seems a profanation to call that venerable, stately room by so flippant and modern a name—is large and lofty, ceiled with great beams of cedar, and lighted by large windows which must contain many scores of small panes of glass. There were treasures of rarest old china and Delf-ware, with curious old carved stands for the most fragile dishes. A wealth of swinging baskets of flowers and ferns, and bright girls' faces, lighted up the solemn, shady old room, in which we must not linger, for there is much to see outside. First we go to the cellar, as it is called, though it is far from being underground, and is in fact a spacious stone building, with an elaborately carved pediment. Here are rows and rows of giant casks, stretching on either hand into avenues of black distance; but these are mere children in the nursery compared to those we are going to see. But a pause has to be made in a middle room, full of quaintest odds and ends—cross-

bows, long whips of hippopotamus hide, strange rusty old swords and firearms,—to look at a map of Africa drawn somewhere about 1620. It hangs on the wall, and is hardly to be touched, for the paint and varnish crack and peel off at a breath. It is a marvel of accurate geographical knowledge, and is far better filled in than the maps of yesterday. All poor Livingstone's great geographical discoveries are marked on it as being known (perhaps only from description), or guessed at, all that long time ago. It was found impossible to photograph it, on account of the dark shade which age has laid over the original yellow varnish; but a careful tracing has been made, and, I believe, sent home to the Geographical Society.

It is in the long corridor beyond this that the "Stuck-vats" live,—puncheons which hold easily some thousand gallons or so, and are of a solemn rotundity, calculated to strike awe into the beholder's heart. Here is white Constantia and red Constantia, young Constantia, middle-aged Constantia, and Constantia so old as to be a liqueur almost beyond price. When the wine has been kept for all these years, the sweetness by which it is distinguished becomes so absorbed and blended as to be hardly perceptible. Presently one of the party throws a door suddenly open, and, behold, we are standing right over a wild, wooded glen, with a streamlet running through it, and black washerwomen beating heaps of white cloths on the strips of shingle. Turtle-doves are cooing, and one might almost fancy one was back again on

the wild Scotch west coast, until some one says eagerly, "Look at the ostriches!" Here they come, with a sort of dancing step, twisting their long necks and snake-like heads from side to side in search of a tempting pebble or trifle of hardware. Their wings are slightly raised, and the long fringe of white feathers rustles softly as they trot easily and gracefully past us. They are young male birds; and in a few months more their plumage, which now resembles that of a turkey-cock, will be jet black, except the long wing-feathers. Some drops of rain are falling, and we hurry back to where the carriage is standing under some splendid oak-trees, swallow a sort of stirrup-cup of delicious hot tea, and so home again as fast as we can go.

October 19.

It is decided that I ought to take a drive in a Cape cart; so, directly after breakfast, a smart, workmanlike-looking vehicle, drawn by a pair of well-bred iron-grey cobs, dashes up under the portico. There are capital horses in Cape Town, but they fetch a good price, and such a pair as these would easily find purchasers at £150. The cart itself is very trim and smart; it holds four people easily, and has a framework sort of hood which falls back at pleasure. It is a capital vehicle, light and strong, and uncommonly comfortable; but I am warned not to imagine that all Cape carts are as easy as this one. Away we go at a fine pace through the delicious, sparkling, morning

sunshine and crisp air, soon turning off the red high road into a sandy, marshy flat, with a sort of brackish backwater standing in pools here and there.

We are going to call on Langalibalele and his son Malambuli, who are "located" at Uitabugt on the Cape Downs, about four miles from the town. It is a sort of farm residence, and, considering that the Chief has hitherto lived in a reed hut, he is not badly off, for he has plenty of room out of doors as well as a good house over his head. We bump over some strange and rough bits of sandy road, and climb up and down steep banks in a manner seldom done on wheels. There is a wealth of lovely flowers blossoming around, but I can't help fixing my eyes on the pole of the cart, which is sometimes sticking straight up in the air, its silver hook shining merrily in the sun; or else it has disappeared altogether, and I can only see the horses' haunches: that is when we are going *down* hill, and I think it is even a more terrible sensation than when we are playfully scrambling, as a cat might, up some sandy hillock.

Here is the "location" at last, thank Heaven! and there is Langalibalele, sitting in the verandah—"stoep" (pronounced "stoup") they call it here—on his haunches on a brick taking snuff. He looks as comfortable as if he were in an arm-chair, but it must be a difficult thing to do, if you think seriously of it. The etiquette seems to be to take no notice of him as we pass into the parlour, where we present our pass, and the people in authority satisfy themselves that we



"LANGALIBALELE."—*Page* 18.

proceeded to hide away his new treasure. He was dressed exactly like a dissenting minister, and declared, through the interpreter, that he was perfectly comfortable. The impression here seems to be that he is a restless, intriguing, and mischief-making old man, who may consider himself as having come out of the hornet's nest he tried to stir up, uncommonly well.

We don't want to bump up and down the sandy plain again, so a lively conversation goes on in Dutch about the road, between one of my gentlemen and somebody who looks like a "stuck-vat" upon short legs. The dialogue is fluent and lively, beginning with "Ja, ja!" and ending with "All right!" but it leads to our hitting off the right track exactly, and coming out at a lovely little cottage villa under the mountain, where we rested and lunched, and then strolled about up the hill spurs, through myrtle hedges and shady oak avenues. Then, before the afternoon shadows grow too long, we drive off to "Groote Schuur," the ancient granary of the first settlers, but now turned into a roomy, comfortable country house, standing amid luxuriant trees, perfect as a summer residence, and securely sheltered from "sou'-easters." We approach it through a double avenue of tall Italian pines. After a little while we go out once more for a ramble, up some quaint old brick steps, and so through a beautiful glen, all fringed and feathered with fresh young fronds of maiden-hair fern, and masses of hydrangea bushes, clothing the

steep sides of the ravine, which must be beautiful as a poet's dream when they are covered with their great bunches of pale blue blossoms. That will not be until Christmastide; and, alas, I shall not be here to see, for already my three days of grace are ended and over, and this very evening we must steam away, leaving a great deal yet unvisited of what is interesting and picturesque, and parting from friends who three days ago were strangers, but who have made every moment since we landed a bright and pleasant memory.

LETTER II.

ALONG THE COAST.

ALGOA BAY, *October* 23, 1875.

TWO days ago we steamed out of Table Bay, on just such a grey, drizzling afternoon as that on which we entered it. But the weather cleared directly we got out to sea, and since then it has carried us along as though we had been on a pleasant summer cruise. All yesterday we were coasting along the low downs which edge the dangerous sea-board for miles upon miles. From the deck of the *Edinburgh Castle* the effect is monotonous enough, although just now everything is brightly green, and with their long riband fringe of white breaker-foam glinting in the spring sunshine, the stretch of undulating hillocks looked its best. This part of the coast is well lighted, and it was always a matter of felicitation at night, when every eighty miles or so the guiding ray of a lighthouse shone out in the soft gloom of a starlight night. One of these lonely towers stands

more than 800 feet above the sea level, and warns ships off the terrible Agulhas Bank.

We have dropped our anchor this fresh, bright morning, a mile or so from the shore on which Port Elizabeth stands. Algoa Bay is not much of a shelter, and it is always a chance whether a sudden "south-caster" may not come tearing down upon the shipping, necessitating a sudden tripping of anchors and running out to sea, to avoid the fate which we see staring us warningly in the face, in the shape of the gaunt bare ribs or rusty cylinders of sundry cast-away vessels. To-day the weather is on its good behaviour. The "south-caster"

> "Rests on its airy nest
> As still as a brooding dove,"

and sun and sea are doing their best to show off the queer little straggling town, creeping up the low sandy hills that lie before us. I am assured that Port Elizabeth is a flourishing mercantile place. From the deck of our ship I can't at all perceive that it is flourishing, or doing anything except basking in the pleasant sunshine. But when I go on shore an hour or two later, I am shown a store which takes away my breath, and before whose miscellaneous contents the stoutest-hearted female shopper must needs *baisser son pavillon.* Everything in this vast emporium looked as neat and orderly as possible; and though the building is twice as big as the largest Co-operative store in London, there was no hurry or

confusion. Thimbles and ploughs, eau-de-cologne and mangles, American stoves, cotton dresses of astounding patterns to suit the taste of Dutch ladies, harmoniums and flat-irons—all stood peaceably side by side together; but these were all unconsidered trifles beside the more serious business of the establishment, which was wool—wool in every shape, and stage, and bale. In this department, however—although for the sake of the dear old New Zealand days my heart warms at the sight of the huge packages—I was not supposed to take much interest. So we pass quickly out into the street again, get into a large open-carriage driven by a black coachman, and make the best of our way up to a villa on the slope of the sandy hill. Once I am away from the majestic influence of that store, the original feeling of Port Elizabeth being rather a dreary place comes back upon me. But we drive all about—to the Park, which may be said to be in its swaddling clothes *as* a park; and to the Botanic Gardens, where the culture of foreign and colonial flowers and shrubs is carried on, under the chronic difficulties of too much sun and wind, and too little water. Everywhere there is building going on: very modest building, it is true, with rough-and-ready masonry or timber, and roofs of zinc painted in strips of light colour; but everywhere there are signs of progress and growth. People look bored, but healthy; and it does not surprise me in the least to hear, that though there are a good many inhabitants there is not much society. A pretty

little luncheon and a pleasant hour's chat in a cool, shady drawing-room, with plenty of new books, and music, and flowers, gave me another agreeable memory to carry back on board the ship; which, by the way, seemed strangely silent and deserted when we returned, for most of our fellow-passengers had disembarked here on their way to different parts of the interior.

As I saunter up and down the clean, smart-looking deck of what has been our pleasant floating home during these four past weeks, I suddenly perceive a short, squat pyramid on the shore, standing out oddly enough among the low-roofed houses. If it had only been red instead of grey, it might have passed for the model of the label on Bass's beer-bottles; but even as it is, I feel convinced that there is a story connected with it. And so it proves; for this ugly, most unsentimental-looking bit of masonry was built long ago, by a former Governor, as a record of the virtues and perfections of his dead wife, whom, among other lavish epithets of praise, he declares to have been "the most perfect of women." Anyhow, there it stands, on what was once a lonely strip of sand and sea, a memorial—if one can only believe the stone story, now nearly a hundred years old—of a great love and a great sorrow; and one can envy the one, and pity the other, just as much when looking at this queer, unsightly monument, as when one stands on the pure marble threshold of the exquisite Taj Mahal, at Agra, and reads that it, too, in all its

grace and beauty, was reared "in memory of an undying love."

Although the day has been warm and balmy, the evening air strikes chill and raw; and our last evening on board the dear old ship has to be spent under shelter, for it is too cold to sit on deck. With the first hours of daylight next morning we have to be up and packing, for by ten o'clock we must be on board the *Florence*, a small yacht-like coasting steamer, which can go much closer into the sand-banked harbours, scooped by the action of the rivers all along the coast. It is with a very heavy heart that I, for one, say good-bye to the *Edinburgh Castle*, where I have passed so many happy hours and made some such pleasant acquaintances. A ship is a very forcing-house of friendship; and no one who has not taken a voyage can realize how rapidly an acquaintance grows and ripens into a friend, under the lovely influences of sea and sky. We have all been so happy together; everything has been so comfortable, everybody so kind, that one would indeed be cold-hearted if, when the last moment of our halcyon voyage arrived, it could bring with it anything short of a regret. With the same chivalrous goodness and courtesy which has taken thought for the comfort of our every movement since we left Dartmouth, our captain insists on seeing us safely on board the *Florence* (what a toy-boat she looks after our stately ship!), and satisfies himself that we can be settled comfortably once more in our doll's-

house of a new cabin. Then there comes a reluctant good-bye to him and all our kind care-takers of the *Edinburgh Castle;* and the last glimpse we catch of her—for the *Florence* darts out of the bay like a swallow in a hurry—is dipping her ensign in courteous farewell to us.

In less than twenty-four hours we had reached another little port some 150 miles or so up the coast called East London. Here the harbour is again only an open roadstead, and hardly any vessel drawing more than four or five feet of water can get in at all near the shore, for between us and it is a bar of shifting sand, washed down day by day by the strong current of the river Buffalo. All the cargo has to be transferred to lighters, and a little tug-steamer hastens backwards and forwards with messages of entreaty to these said lighters to come out and take away their loads. We had dropped our anchor by daylight, yet at ten o'clock scarcely a boat had made its appearance alongside, and everyone was fuming and fretting at the delay and consequent waste of fine weather and daylight. That is to say, it was a fine, bright day overhead, with sunshine and sparkle all round, but the heavy roll of the sea never ceased for a moment. From one side to the other, until her ports touched the water, backwards and forwards, with slow monotonous heaving, our little vessel swayed with the swaying rollers, until everybody on board felt sick and sorry. "This is comparatively a calm day," I was told: "you can't possibly imagine from this

what rolling really is." But I *can* imagine quite easily, and do not at all desire a closer acquaintance with this restless Indian Ocean. Breakfast is a moment of penance: little G—— is absolutely fainting from agonies of sea-sickness, though he had borne all our South Atlantic tossings with perfect equanimity; and it is with real joy that I hear the lifeboat is alongside, and the kind-hearted captain of the *Florence* (*how* kind sailors are!) offers to take nurse, babies, and me on shore, so as to escape some eight or ten hours of this agonizing rolling.

In happy unconsciousness of what landing at East London even in a lifeboat meant when a bar had to be crossed, we were all tumbled and bundled more or less unceremoniously into the great roomy boat, and immediately taken in tow by the busy little tug. For half a mile or more we made good progress in her wake, being in a position to set at nought the threatening water mountains which came tumbling in furious haste from seawards. It was not until we seemed close to the shore and all our troubles over that the tug was obliged to cast us off owing to the rapidly shoaling water, and we prepared to make the best of our own way in. Bad was that best indeed, though the peril came and went so quickly that it is but a confused impression which I retain of what was a really terrible moment. One instant I heard felicitations exchanged between our captain, who sits protectingly close to me, with poor little fainting G——, who lies like death in my arms, and the

captain of the lifeboat. The next moment, in spite of sudden panic and presence of danger, I almost laughed to hear the latter sing out, in sharp tones of terror and dismay, "Ah, you would, would you?" coupled with rapid orders to the stout rowers, and shouts to us of "Look out!" And I *do* look out, to see on one side sand which the retreating wave has sucked dry, and in which the boat seems trying to bury herself as though she were a snail; on the other hand, there towers above us a huge green wave, white crested and curled, which is rushing at us like a devouring monster. If that billow breaks into the boat we shall surely be all washed out of her; and I glanced, as I thought for the last time, at the pale nurse on whose lap lay the baby placidly sucking his bottle. I see a couple of sailors lay hold of her and child with one hand each, whilst with the other they cling desperately to the thwarts. A stout sea-faring man flings the whole weight of his ponderous pilot-coated body upon G—— and me. I hear shouts and a roar of water, and lo, we are washed right up alongside of the rude landing-place—still *in* the boat indeed, but wet and frightened to the last degree. Looking back on it all, I can distinctly remember that it was not the sight of the overhanging wave which cost me my deadliest pang of sickening fright, but the glimpse I caught of the shining, cruel-looking sand sucking us in so silently and gradually. We were all trembling so much that it seemed as impossible to stand upright on the earth as on the tossing waters, and it was with

reeling, drunken-looking steps, that we rolled through the heavy sand street until we reached the shelter of an exceedingly dirty hotel. Everything in it required courage to touch, and it was with many qualms that I deposited limp little G—— on a filthy sofa. However, the mistress of the house looked clean, and so did the cups and saucers she quickly produced, and by the time we had finished a capital breakfast we were all quite in good spirits again, and so sharpened up as to be able to "mock ourselves" of our past perils and present discomforts. Outside there were strange, beautiful shrubs in flower, tame pigeons came cooing and bowing in at the door, and above all there was an enchanting freshness and balminess in the sunny air.

In about an hour "Capting Florence," as G—— styles our new commander, calls for us, and takes us out sight-seeing. First and foremost, across the river to the rapidly growing railway lines, where a brand new locomotive was hissing away with full steam up. Here we were met and welcomed by the energetic superintendent of this iron road, and to my intense delight, after explaining to me what a long distance into the interior the line had to go, and how fast it was getting on, considering the difficulties in the way of doing anything in South Africa, from washing a pocket-handkerchief up to laying down a railway, he proposed that we should get *on* the engine and go as far as the line was open for anything like safe travelling. Never was such a delightful ten minutes as those

spent in whizzing along through the park-like country and cutting fast through the heavenly air! In vain did I smell that my serge skirts were getting dreadfully singed, in vain did I see most uncertain bits of rail before me—it was all too perfectly enchanting to care for danger or disgrace, and I could have found it in my heart to echo G——'s plaintive cry for "more" when we came to the end and had to get off. But it consoled us a little to watch the stone-breaking machine crunching up small rocks as though they had been lumps of sugar; and after looking at that, we set off for the unfinished station, and could take in, even in its present skeleton state, how commodious and handsome it will all be some day. You are all so accustomed to be whisked about the civilized world when and where you choose, that it is difficult to make you understand the enormous boon the first line of railway is to a new country; not only for the convenience of travellers, but for the transport of goods, the setting free of hundreds of cattle and horses and drivers—all sorely needed for other purposes—and the fast following effects of opening up the resources of the back districts. In these regions labour is the great difficulty, and one needs to hold both patience and temper fast with both one's hands when watching either Kafir or Coolie at work. The white man cannot or will not do much with his hands out here, so the navvies are slim, lazy-looking blacks, who jabber and grunt and sigh a good deal more than they work.

It is a fortunate circumstance that the delicious air keeps us all in a chronic state of hunger, for it appears in South Africa that one is expected to eat every half hour or so. And, shamed I am to confess it, we *do* eat, and eat with a good appetite too, a delicious luncheon at the superintendent's, albeit it followed closely on the heels of our enormous breakfast at the dirty hotel. Such a pretty little bachelor's box as it was! so cool and quiet and neat, built somewhat after the fashion of the Pompeian houses, with a small square garden full of orange-trees in the centre, and rooms opening out of each corridor. After luncheon a couple of nice light Cape carts came to the door, and we set off to see a beautiful garden, whose owner had all a Dutchman's passion for flowers. There was fruit as well as flowers. Pine-apples and jasmine, strawberries and honeysuckle grew side by side, with bordering orange-trees, feathery bamboos, and sheltering gum-trees. In the midst of the garden stood a sort of double platform, up whose steep ladder we all climbed. From this one got a good idea of the slightly undulating land all about, waving down with solidified billows to where the deep blue waters sparkled and rolled restlessly beyond the white line of waves ever breaking on the bar.

I miss animal life sadly in these parts. The dogs I see about the street are few in number, and miserably currish specimens of their kind. "Good dogs don't answer out here," I am told: that is to say, they get a peculiar sort of distemper, or ticks bite

them and they get weak from loss of blood, or become degenerate in some way. The horses and cattle are small and poor-looking, and hard-worked, very dear to buy and very difficult to keep and to feed. I don't even see many cats, and a pet bird is a rarity. However, as we stood on the breezy platform I saw a most beautiful wild bird fly over the rose-hedge just below us. It was about as big as a crow, but with a strange irridescent plumage. When it flitted into the sunshine its back and wings shone like a rainbow, and the next moment it looked perfectly black and velvety in the shade; now a turquoise blue tint comes out on its spreading wings, and a slant in the sunshine turns the blue into a chrysoprase green. Nobody could tell me its name; our Dutch host spoke exactly like Hans Breitmann, and declared it was only a "bid of a crow," and so we had to leave it and the platform, and come down to more roses and tea. There was yet so much to be seen and to be done that we could not stay long, and, laden with magnificent fragrant bouquets of *gloire de Dijon* roses and honeysuckle, and divers strange and lovely flowers, we drove off again in our Cape carts. I observed that instead of saying "woa," or checking the horses in any way by the reins, the driver always whistles to them, a long, low whistle, and they stand quite still directly. We bumped up and down over extraordinarily rough places, and finally slid down a steep cutting to the brink of the river Buffalo, which we ferried across,

all standing, on a big wooden punt—or rather pontoon.

A hundred yards or so of rapid driving then took us to a sort of wharf projecting into the river, where the important-looking little tug awaited us; and no sooner were we all safely on board—rather a large party by this time, for we had gone on picking up stragglers ever since we started, only three in number, from the hotel—than she sputtered and fizzed herself off up stream. By this time it was the afternoon, and I almost despair of making you see the woodland beauty of that broad mere; fringed down to the water's edge on one side with shrubs and tangle of roses and woodbine, with ferns and every lovely green creeping thing. That was on the bank which was sheltered from the high winds; the other hill-side showed the contrast, for there, though green indeed, only a few feathery tufts of pliant shrubs had survived the force of some of these south-eastern gales. We paddled steadily along in mid-stream, and from the bridge (where little G—— and I had begged "Capting Florence" to let us stand) one could see the double of each leaf and tendril and passing cloud mirrored, sharp and clear, in the crystalline water. The lengthening shadows from rock and fallen crag were in some places flung quite across our little boat; and so through the soft lovely air flooded with brightest sunshine we made our way past Pic-nic Creek, where another stream joins the Buffalo, and makes miniature green islands and harbours at its mouth, up as far as

the river was navigable for even so small a steamer as ours. Everyone was sorry when it became time to turn, but there was no choice; the sun-burnt, good-looking young captain of the tug held up a warning hand, and round we went with a side sweep, under the shadows, into the sunlight, down the middle of the stream, all too soon to please us.

Before we left East London, however, there was one more great work to be glanced at; and accordingly we paid a hasty visit to the office of the superintendent of the new harbour works, and saw plans and drawings of what will indeed be a magnificent achievement when carried out. Yard by yard, with patient under-sea sweeping, all that waste of sand brought down by the Buffalo is being cleared away. Yard by yard two massive arms of solidest masonry are stretching themselves out beyond those cruel breakers. The river is being forced into so narrow a channel that the wash of the water must needs carry the sand far out to sea in future, and scatter it in soundings where it cannot accumulate into such a barrier as that which now exists. Lighthouses will guard this safe entrance into a tranquil anchorage, and so at some not too far distant day, there is good hope that East London may be one of the most valuable harbours on this vast coast; and when her railway has even reached the point to which it is at present projected, nearly 200 miles away, it will indeed be a thriving place. Even now there is a greater air of movement and life and progress about

the little sea-port, what with the railway and the harbour works, than any other place I have yet seen; and each great undertaking is in the hands of men of first-rate ability and experience, who are as persevering as they are energetic.

After looking well over these most interesting plans, there was nothing left for us to do except to make a sudden raid on the hotel, pick up our shawls and bags, pay a most moderate bill of *7s. 6d.* for breakfast for three people, luncheon for two, and the use of a room all day, piteously entreat the mistress of the inn to sell us half a bottle of milk for G——'s breakfast to-morrow, as he can't drink the preserved milk, and so back again on board the tug. The difficulty about milk and butter is the first trouble which besets a family travelling in these parts. Everywhere milk is scarce and poor, and the butter such as no charwoman would touch in England. Whatever the cause, the result is the same—namely, that one has to go down on one's knees for a tea-cupful of milk which is but poor thin stuff at its best, and that Irish salt butter out of a tub is a costly delicacy.

Having secured this precious quarter of a bottle of milk, for which I was really as grateful as though it had been the Koh-i-noor, we hastened back to the wharf and got on board the little tug again. "Now for the Bridge," cry G—— and I; for has not "Capting Florence" promised us a splendid but safe tossing across the bar? And faithfully he and the bar and

the boat keep their word, for we are in no danger it seems, and yet we appear to take the bar like a double fence in a stiff country. We leap it, receiving a staggering buffet, first on one paddle-wheel and then on the other, from the angry guardian breakers which seem sworn foes of boats and passengers. Again and again are we knocked aside by huge billows, as though the poor little tug were a walnut-shell; again and again do we recover ourselves and struggle bravely on, sometimes with but one paddle in the water, sometimes burying our bowsprit in a big green wave too high to climb, and dashing right through it, just as if we shut our eyes and went at everything. The spray flies high over our heads; G—— and I are drenched over and over again, but we shake the sparkling water off our coats, for all the world like Newfoundland dogs, and are all right again in a moment. "Is that the very last?" asks G—— sorrowfully, as we take our last breaker like a five-barred gate, flying, and find ourselves safe and sound, but quivering a good deal, in what seems comparatively smooth water. Is it smooth though? Look at the *Florence* and all the other vessels; still at it, see-saw, backwards and forwards, roll, roll, roll. How thankful we all are to have escaped a long day of that sickening monotonous motion! But there is the getting on board to be accomplished, for the brave little tug dare not come too near to her big sister steamboat, or she would roll over on her. So we signal for a boat, and quickly the largest which the *Florence* possesses is launched

and manned; no easy task in such a sea, but accomplished in smart and seaman-like fashion. The sides of the tug are low, so it is not very difficult to scramble and tumble into the boat, which is laden to the water's edge by new passengers from East London and their luggage. When, however, we have reached the rolling *Florence*, it is no easy matter to get out of the said boat and on board. There is a ladder let down indeed from the *Florence*'s side, but how are we to use it when one moment half-a-dozen rungs are buried deep in the sea, and the next instant ship and ladder and all have rolled right away from us? It has to be done, however; and what a tower of strength and encouragement does "Capting Florence" prove himself at this juncture! We are all to sit perfectly still, no one is to move until their name is called, and then they are to come unhesitatingly and do exactly what they are told.

"Pass up the baby," is the first order which I hear given; and that astonishing baby is "passed up" accordingly. I use the word "astonishing" advisedly, for never was an infant so bundled about, uncomplainingly: he is just as often upside down as not; he is generally handed from one quarter-master to another by the gathers of his little blue frock; seas break over his cradle on deck: but nothing disturbs him. He grins and sleeps, and pulls at his bottle through everything, and gets fatter and browner and more impudent every day. On this occasion, when—after rivalling Leotard's most daring feats on the trapèze,

in my scramble up the side of a vessel which was lurching *away* from me—I at last reached the deck, I found the ship's carpenter nursing the baby, who had seized the poor man's beard firmly with one hand, and with the finger and thumb of the other he was attempting to pick out one of his merry blue eyes. "Avast there!" cries the long-suffering sailor, and gladly relinquishes the mischievous bundle to me.

Up with the anchor, and off we go once more, into the gathering darkness of what turns out to be a wet and windy night. Next day the weather had recovered its temper, and I was called up on deck directly after breakfast, to see the "Gates of St. John;" a really fine pass on the coast, where the river Umzimoubu rushes through great granite cliffs into the sea. If the exact truth is to be told, I must confess I am a little disappointed with this coast scenery. I have heard so much of its beauty, and as yet, though I have seen it under exceptionally favourable conditions of calm weather, which has allowed us to stand in very close to shore, I have not seen anything really fine until these "gates" came in view. It has all been monotonous undulating downs, here and there dotted with trees, and in some places the ravines are filled with what we used to call in New Zealand "bush"—*i.e.* miscellaneous greenery. Here and there a bold cliff or tumbled pile of red sandstone makes a land-mark for the passing ships, but otherwise the uniformity is great indeed. The ordinary weather along this coast is something frightful, and the great reputation of our

little *Florence* is built on the method in which she rides, dry and safe, among these stormy waters, like a duck. Now that we are close to "Fair Natal" the country opens out and improves in beauty. There are still the same sloping, falling green downs, but higher downs rise behind them, and again beyond are blue and purple hills. Here and there, too, are clusters of fat, dumpy haystacks to be seen, which in reality are no haystacks at all, but Kafir kraals. Just before we pass the cliff and river which marks where No Man's Land ends and Natal begins, these little "locations" are more frequently to be observed; though what the inhabitants subsist on is a marvel to me, for we are only a mile or so from shore, and all the seeing power of all the field-glasses on board fails to discover a solitary animal. We can see lots of babies crowding about the hole which serves as door to a Kafir hut, and they are all as fat as little pigs; but what do they live on? Butter-milk I am told,—that is to say sour milk, for the true Kafir palate does not appreciate fresh, sweet milk—and a sort of porridge made of "mealies." In my ignorance I used to think "mealies" was a coined word for potatoes, but it really signifies maize or Indian corn which is rudely crushed, and seems the staple food of man and beast.

In the meantime we are speeding on gaily over the bright waters, never very calm along this shore. Presently we come to a spot clearly marked by some odd-coloured tumble-down rocks and the remains of a

great iron butt, where more than a hundred years ago the *Grosvenor*, a splendid clipper ship, was wrecked. There is a terrible story told, how the men nearly all perished, or were made away with ; and a few women were got on shore, and carried off as prizes to the kraals of the Kafir chieftains. What sort of husbands these stalwart warriors made to their reluctant brides tradition does not say ; but it is a fact that many of their descendants are lunatics or idiots.

As the afternoon draws on, a chill mist creeps over the hills, and provokingly blots out the coast, which gets more beautiful every league we go. I wanted to remain up and see the light on the bluff just outside Port Durban, but a heavy shower drove me down to my wee cabin before ten o'clock.

LETTER III.

FAIR NATAL.

SOON after midnight, the rattling of the anchor chains, and the sudden change of motion from pitching and jumping to the old monotonous roll, told us that we were once more outside a bar, with a heavy sea on, and that there we must remain until the tug came to fetch us. But, alas, the tug had to make short work of it next morning, on account of the unaccommodating state of the tide; and all our hopes of breakfasting on shore were dashed by the hasty announcement at 5 A.M. that the tug was alongside, the mails were rapidly being put on board of her, and that she could not wait for passengers or anything else, because ten minutes later there would not be water enough to float her over the bar.

"When shall *we* be able to get over the bar?" I asked dolefully. "Not until the afternoon," was the prompt and uncompromising reply, delivered through my keyhole by the authority in charge of us: and he

proved to be quite right. But I am bound to say the time passed more quickly than we dared to hope or expect, for an hour later a bold little fishing-boat made her way through the breakers and across the bar, in the teeth of wind and rain, bringing F—— on board. There is so much to tell, and so much to be told, that, as G—— declares, "it is afternoon directly;" so, the signal flags being up, we trip our anchor once more, and rush at the bar. Two quarter-masters and an officer at the wheel, the pilot and captain on the bridge, all hands on deck and on the alert—for always, under the most favourable circum-stances, the next five minutes hold a peril in every second. "Stand by for spray!" sings out somebody; and we do stand by, luckily for ourselves, for "spray" means the top of two or three waves. The dear little *Florence* is as plucky as she is pretty, and appears to shut her eyes and lower her head, and go *at* the bar. Scrape, scrape, scrape! "We've stuck!" "No, we haven't!" "Helm hard down!" "Over!" And so we are: among the breakers, it is true, knocked first to one side and then to the other, buffeted here and buffeted there; but we keep right on, and a few more turns of the screw take us into calm water under the green hills of the Bluff. The breakers are behind us, we have twenty fathom of water under our keel. The voyage is ended and over. The captain takes off his straw hat, to mop his curly head. Everybody's face loses the expression of anxiety and rigidity it had worn these past ten minutes, and boats swarm

round the ship like locusts. The baby is passed over the ship's side for the last time, having been well kissed and petted and praised by everyone as he was handed from one to the other, and we row swiftly away to the low sandy shore of "the Point."

Only a few warehouses, or rather sheds of warehouses, are to be seen; and a rude sort of railway station, which appears to afford indiscriminate shelter to boats as well as to engines. There are leisurely trains which saunter into the town of Durban, a mile and a half away, every half-hour or so, but one of these "crawlers" had just started. The sun was very hot, and we voyagers were all sadly weary and headachy. But the best of the Colonies is the prompt, self-sacrificing kindness of old-comers to new-comers. Some stranger gentleman had driven down in his own nice, comfortable pony carriage, and without a moment's hesitation he insists on our all getting into it, and making the best of our way to our hotel. It is too good an offer to be refused, for the sun is hot, and the babies are tired to death; so we start, slowly enough, to plough our way through heavy sand up to the axles. If the tide had been out, we could have driven quickly along the hard dry sand; but we comfort ourselves by remembering that there had been water enough on the bar, and make the best of our way through clouds of impalpable dust, to a better road, of which a couple of hundred yards lands us at our hotel. It looks bare and unfurnished enough in all conscience, but at all events it

is tolerably clean and quiet, and we can wash our sun-burnt faces and hands ; and, as nurse says, "turn ourselves round."

Coolies swarm in every direction ; picturesque fruit and fish-sellers throng the verandah of the kitchen, a little way off; and everything looks bright and green and fresh, having been well washed by the recent rains. With the restlessness of people who have been cooped up on board ship for a month, we insist, the moment it is cool enough, on being taken out for a walk. Fortunately the public gardens are close at hand, and we amuse ourselves very well in them for an hour or two ; but we are all thoroughly tired and worn out, and glad to get to bed, even in gaunt narrow rooms, on hard pallets.

The two following days were spent in looking after and collecting our cumbrous array of boxes and baskets. Tin baths, wicker chairs and baskets,—all had to be counted and re-counted until one got weary of the word "luggage;" but that is the penalty of bragging babies about the world. In the intervals of the serious business of tracing No. V. and running No. X. to earth in the corner of a warehouse, I made pleasant acquaintances and received kindest words and notes of welcome from unknown friends. All this warm-hearted unconventional kindness goes far to make the stranger forget his "own people and his father's house," and feel at once at home amid strange and unfamiliar scenes. After all, "home" is portable, luckily ; and a welcoming smile

and hand-clasp acts as a spell to create it in any place.

After business hours, when it was of no use making expeditions to wharf or custom-house after recusant carpet bags, we drove to the Botanic Gardens. They are large and well kept, but seem principally devoted to shrubs. I was assured that this is the worst time of year for flowers, as the plants have not yet recovered the winter drought. A dry winter and wet summer is the correct atmospheric fashion here. In winter, everything is brown, and dusty, and dried up; in summer, green, and fragrant, and well watered. The gardens are in good order, and I rather regretted not being able to examine them more thoroughly.

Another afternoon we drove to the "Berea," a sort of suburban Richmond; where the rich, semi-tropical vegetation is cleared away in patches, and villas with pretty pleasure-grounds are springing up in every direction. The road winds up the luxuriantly-clothed slopes, with every here and there lovely sea-views of the harbour, with the purple lights of the Indian Ocean stretching away beyond. Every villa must have an enchanting prospect from its front door; and one can quite understand how alluring to the merchants and men of business in Durban must be the idea of getting away after office hours, and sleeping on such high ground in so fresh and healthy an atmosphere.

And here I must say that we Maritzburgians (I am only one in prospective) wage a constant and deadly warfare with the Durbanites on the score of the

health and convenience of our respective cities. *We* are 2,000 feet above the sea, and fifty-two miles inland; so we talk in a pitying tone of the poor Durbanites as dwellers in a very hot and unhealthy place. "Relaxing" is the word we apply to their climate, when we want to be particularly nasty; and they retaliate by reminding us that they are ever so much older than we are (which is an advantage in a colony), and that they are on the coast, and can grow all manner of nice things which we cannot compass; to say nothing of their climate being more equable than ours, and their thunder-storms, although longer in duration, mere flashes in the pan compared to what we in our amphitheatre of hills have to undergo at the hands of the electric current. We never can find an answer to that taunt; and if the Durbanites only follow up their victory by allusions to their abounding bananas and other fruits, their vicinity to the shipping, and consequent facility of getting almost anything quite easily, we are completely silenced, and it is a wonder if we retain presence of mind enough to murmur "flies." On the score of dust we are about equal; but I must in fairness confess that Durban is a more lively and better-looking town than Maritzburg turned out to be, though the effect from a little distance is not so good.

Our last day, or rather half-day, in Durban, was very full of sight-seeing and work. F—— was extremely anxious for me to see the sun rise from the signal station on the Bluff; and accordingly he, G——,

and I started with the earliest dawn. We drove through the sand again, in a hired and springless Cape cart, down to the Point, got into the port-captain's boat, and rowed across to a little strip of sand at the foot of a winding path, cut out of the dense vegetation which makes the Bluff such a refreshingly-green headland to eyes of wave-worn voyagers. A stalwart Kafir carried our picnic basket, with tea, and milk, bread, butter, and eggs, up the hill; and it was delightful to follow the windings of the path through beautiful bushes bearing strange and lovely flowers, and knit together in a green tangle by the tendrils of a convolvulus clematis, or sort of wild passion-flower, whose blossoms were opening to the fresh morning air. It was a cool but misty morning, and though we got to our destination in ample time, there was never any sunrise at all to be seen. In fact, the sun declined to get up the whole day,—so far as I know; for the sea looked grey and solemn and sleepy, and the land kept its drowsy mantle of haze over its flat shore, which haze thickened and deepened into a Scotch mist as the morning wore on.

We returned, not having gained much by our early rising, on the leisurely railway,—a railway so calm and stately in its method of progression that it is not at all unusual to see a passenger step calmly out of it when it is at its fullest speed of crawl, and wave his hand to his companions as he disappears down the bye-path leading to his little home. The passengers are conveyed at a uniform rate of sixpence a head,

which sixpence is collected promiscuously by a small boy at odd moments during the journey. There are no nice distinctions of class either, for we all travel amicably together in compartments which are a judicious mixture of a third class carriage and a cattle truck. Of course wood is the only fuel used, and that but sparingly, for it is exceedingly costly.

There was still much to be done by the afternoon, many visitors to receive, notes to write, and packages to arrange, for our travelling of these fifty-two miles spreads itself over a good many hours, as you will see. Think of the five o'clock Brighton express, and then think of our journey,—the extremes of speed and slowness. Well, about three o'clock the Government mule waggon came to the door. It may truly and literally be described as "stopping the way," for not only is the waggon itself a huge and cumbrous machine, but it is drawn by eight mules, in pairs, and driven by a couple of black drivers. I say driven by a couple of drivers, because the driving was evidently an affair of copartnership: one held the reins,—such elaborate reins as they were, a confused tangle of leather,—and the other had the care of two or three whips of different lengths. The drivers were both jet black: not Kafirs, but Cape Hotentots, descendants of the old slaves taken by the Dutch. They appeared to be great friends these two, and took earnest counsel together at every rut and drain and steep pinch of the road, which stretched away over hill and dale before

us, a broad red track with high green hedges on either hand. Although the rain had not yet fallen long or heavily, the ditches were all running freely with red, muddy water, and the dust had already begun to cake itself into a sticky paste of red clay. The waggon was shut in by curtains at the back and sides, and could hold eight passengers easily. Luckily for the poor mules, however, we were only five grown-up people, including the drivers. The road was extremely pretty, and the town looked very picturesque as we gradually rose above it and looked down on it and the harbour together. On a fine, clear afternoon it would have been still nicer, although I was much congratulated on account of the absence of its alternative—dust. Still it was possible to have too much of a good thing, and by the time we reached Pine Town, only fourteen miles away, the roads had begun to tell on the poor mules, and the chilly damp of the closing evening made us all only too thankful to get under the shelter of a roadside inn (or hotel as they are called here), which was snug and bright and comfortable enough to be a credit to any colony.

A steady downpour of rain all through the night made our early start next day an affair of doubt and discouragement and disn al prophecy; but we persevered, and accomplished another long stage, through a cold, persistent drizzle, before reaching an inn, where we enjoyed simply the best breakfast I ever tasted,—or at all events the best I have yet had in Natal.

The mules also were unharnessed, and after taking each a good roll on the damp grass, turned out in the drizzling rain for a rest and nibble until their more substantial repast was ready. The rain cleared up from time to time, but an occasional heavy shower warned us that the weather was still sulky. It was in much better heart and spirits, however, that we made a second start, about eleven o'clock, and struggled on through heavy roads, up and down weary hills, slipping here, sliding there, and threatening to stick everywhere. Our next stage was to a place where the only available shelter was an unprepossessing inn, at which we lingered as short a time as practicable,—only long enough, in fact, to feed the mules,—and then, with every prospect of a finer afternoon, we set out once more on the longest and last stage of our journey. All the way the road has been very beautiful, in spite of the shrouding mist; especially at the Inchanga Pass, where, round the shoulder of the hill, as fair a prospect stretches before you as the heart of painter could desire. Curved green hills, dotted with clusters of timber exactly like an English park, and a background of distant ranges rising in softly-rounded outlines, with deep violet shadows in the clefts and pale green lights on the slopes. Nestling out of sight, amid this rich pasture-land, are the kraals of a large Kafir location, and no one can say that these, the children of the soil, have not secured one of the most favoured spots.

The last hours of our journey are, as is the way of

all such last hours, rather wearisome. The mules struggle bravely along, though their ears are beginning to flap about anyway, instead of being held straight and sharply pricked forward, and the encouraging cries of "Pull up, Capting!" "Now then, Blue-Bok, hi!" become more and more frequent. The driver in charge of the whips is less nice in his choice of a scourge with which to urge on the patient animals, and whacks them soundly with whatever comes first. The children have long ago grown tired of the confinement and darkness of the back seats of the hooded vehicle. We are all black and blue from falling in and out of deep holes hiddenby mud, which occur at every yard; but still our flagging spirits keep pretty good, for our little Table Mountain has been left behind; whilst before us, leaning up in one corner of an amphitheatre of hills, are the trees which mark where Maritzburg nestles. The mules see it too, and, sniffing their stables afar off, jog along faster. Only one more rise to pull up: we turn a little off the high road, and there amid a young plantation of trees, with roses and honeysuckle and passion flowers climbing up the posts of the wide verandah, and a fair and enchanting prospect lying at our feet, stands our new home, with its broad red-tiled roof stretching out a friendly welcome to the tired, belated travellers.

LETTER IV.

FIRST DAYS.

MARITZBURG, *November*, 1875.

THE weather at the beginning of this month was lovely, and the climate perfection; but now (I am writing on its last days) it is getting very hot and trying. If ever people might stand excused for talking about the weather when they meet, it is us Natalians, for, especially at this time of year, it varies from hour to hour. All along the coast one hears of terrible buffeting and knocking about among the shipping in the open roadsteads which have to do duty for harbours in these parts; and it was but a few days since that the lifeboat, with the English mail on board, capsized in crossing the bar at Durban. The telegram was, as telegrams always are, terrifying in its vagueness, and spoke of the mail-bags as "floating about." When one remembered the vast size of the breakers on which this floating would take place, it sounded hopeless for our letters. They turned up.

however, a few days later, in a pulpy state, it is true, but quite readable, though the envelopes were curiously blended and engrafted upon the letters inside, so much so that they required to be taken together, for it was impossible to separate them. I had recourse to the expedient of spreading my letters on a dry towel and draining them, before proceeding to turn over the pages with a knife and fork. Still we were all only too thankful to get our correspondence in any shape or form; for precious beyond the power of words to express are home-letters to us so far away from home.

But to return to our weather. At first it was simply perfect. Bright, hot days—not too hot, for a light fresh breeze tempered even the mid-day heat—and crisp, bracing nights succeeded each other during the first fortnight. The country looked exquisitely fresh, in its luxuriant spring tints, over hill and dale; and the rich, red clay soil made a splendid contrast on road and tract, with the brilliant green on either hand. Still people looked anxiously for more rain, declaring that not half enough had fallen to fill tanks and *sluits* (as the ditches are called); and it took a continuous downpour to satisfy these thirsty souls even for the moment. Towards the middle of the month the atmosphere became more oppressive, and the clouds began to come up in thick masses all round the horizon, and gradually spread themselves overhead.

The day before the heaviest rain, though not particularly oppressive, was remarkable for the way in which all manner of insects tried to get under

shelter at nightfall. The verandah was full of big frogs: if a door remained open for a moment they hopped in, and then cried like trapped birds when they found themselves in a corner. As for the winged creatures, it was something wonderful the numbers in which they flew in at the window, wherever a light attracted them. I was busy writing English letters that evening, and I declare the winged ants, exactly like cockroaches, fairly drove me away from the table, whilst the smell of roast moths at the other lamp was quite overpowering. In a few hours came rain indeed —not rain according to English ideas, but a tropical deluge: as many inches falling in a few hours as would fill your rain-gauge for months. I believe my conduct was very absurd that first wet night. The little house had just been newly papered, and as the ceiling was not one to inspire confidence, consisting as it did merely of boards roughly joined together and painted white, through which, and through the tiles beyond, the sky could be seen quite plainly, I suffered the gravest doubts about the water entering in and spoiling my pretty new papers. Accordingly, whenever any burst of rain came heavier than its immediate predecessor, I jumped out of bed in a perfect agony of mind, and roamed, candle in hand, all over the house to see if I could not detect a leak anywhere; but the unpromising-looking roof and ceiling stood the test bravely, and not a drop of all that descending downpour found its way to my new walls.

By the way, I must describe the house to you, remarking first of all that architecture, so far as my observation extends, is almost at its lowest ebb in South Africa. I have hardly seen a single pretty building of any sort or kind since I arrived, although in these small houses it would be so easy to break, by gable and porch, the severe simplicity in which they are built. Whitewashed outer walls with a zinc roof are not uncommon; and the combination is a bald and hideous one, until kindly, luxuriant Nature has had time to step in and cover up man's ugly handiwork with her festoons of roses and passion-flower. Most of the houses have fortunately red-tiled roofs, which are not so ugly, and mine is among the number. It has, as all the houses here have, a broad projecting roof, extending over a wide verandah; and within are four small rooms—two on either side of a narrow passage which runs right through. By a happy afterthought a tiny kitchen has been added, and a corresponding projection, which closely resembles a packingcase, and has been painted of a bright blue colour inside and out. This is the dining-room, and must be severely handled before its present glaring tints can be at all toned down.

At a little distance stands the stable, saddle-room, &c., and a good bedroom for English servants; and beyond that again, among large clumps of rose-bushes, a native hut. It came up here half built; that is, the frame was partly put together elsewhere, and it resembled a huge crinoline more than anything else,

in its original state. Since that, however, it has been made more secure by extra slips of bamboo, each tied in its place with infinite patience and trouble, a knot every inch or two. The final stage consisted of careful thatching with thick bundles of grass laid on the frame-work, and secured by long ropes of plaited grass, binding the whole together. The door is the smallest opening imaginable; and inside it is of course pitch dark. All this labour was performed by stalwart Kafir women; one of whom, a fearfully-repulsive female, informed my cook she had just been bought back by her original husband. Stress of circumstances had obliged him to sell her, and she had been bought by three other husband-masters since then; but was now resold, a bargain, to her first owner, whom she declared she preferred.

Few as are the rooms of the house, they yet are water-tight, which is a great point out here; and the house, being built of large awkward blocks of stone, is cool and shady. When I have arranged things a little, it will be quite comfortable and pretty; and I defy any one to wish for a more exquisite view than can be seen from any corner of the verandah. We are on the brow of a hill, which slopes gently down to the hollow wherein nestles the picturesque little town, or rather village of Maritzburg. The intervening distance of a mile or so conceals the monotony of the straight streets, and hides all architectural shortcomings. The clock-tower, for instance, is quite a

feature in the landscape, and nothing can be prettier than the effect of the red-tiled roofs and white walls peeping out from among thick clumps of trees; whilst beyond, the ground rises again to low hills, with deep purple fissures and clefts in their green sides. It is only a couple of years or so since this same little house was built and the garden laid out, and yet the shrubs and trees are as big as if half-a-dozen years had passed over their leafy heads.

As for the roses, I never saw anything like the way they flourish at their own sweet will. Scarcely a leaf is to be seen on the ugly straggling trees; nothing but masses of roses of every tint and kind and old-fashioned, sweet-scented variety. The utmost I can do in the way of gathering basketfuls appears only in the light of judicious pruning, and next day a dozen blossoms have burst forth to supply the place of each theft of mine. And there is such a variety of vegetation: plants, oaks, bamboos, blue gum-trees and deodaras, seem to flourish equally well within a yard or two of each other, whilst the more distant flower beds are filled with the odd mixture of daturas and dahlias, white fleur-de-lis and bushy geraniums. But the weeds! They are a chronic eyesore, and a grief to every gardener. On path and grass-plat, flower bed and border, they flaunt and flourish. Jack, the Zulu refugee, wages a feeble and totally inadequate warfare against them with a crooked hoe; but he is only a quarter in earnest, and stops to groan and take snuff so often that the result is that our

garden is precisely in the condition of the sluggard, gate and all. This hingeless condition of the gate, however, is, I must in fairness state, neither Jack's nor our fault. It is a new gate, but no one will come out from the town to hang it.

The town itself is rather a shabby assemblage of buildings. It is not to be named the same day as Christchurch, the capital of Canterbury, New Zealand, which ten years ago was decently paved and well lighted by gas. Poor, sleepy Maritzburg consists now, at more than forty years of age (Christchurch is not twenty-five yet), of a few straight, wide, grass-grown streets, which are only picturesque at a little distance on account of their having trees on each side. On particularly dark nights a dozen oil lamps, standing at long intervals apart, are lighted; but when it is even moderate star-light these aids to finding one's way about are prudently dispensed with. There is not a single handsome building in the whole place, but a certain air of quaint interest and life is given to the otherwise desolate streets by the groups of Kafirs, and the teams of waggons waiting for their up-country loads. All the winter trade has been dull, because there could be no grass for the oxen, but now it has recommenced, and the creaking waggon is to be seen once more. Twenty bullocks drag these ponderous contrivances—bullocks so lean that one wonders how they have strength to carry their wide-spreading horns aloft;—bullocks of a stupidity and obstinacy unparalleled in the natural history of horned beasts.

At their heads walks a Kafir lad, called a "fore-looper," who tugs at a rope fastened to the horns of the leading oxen, and in moments of general confusion invariably seems to pull the wrong string, and get the whole team into an inextricable tangle of horns and yokes. Sometimes, on a quiet Sunday morning, I see these teams and waggons "out-spanned" on the green slopes around Maritzburg, making a picturesque addition to the sylvan scenery. Near each waggon a light wreath of smoke steals up into the summer air, marking where some preparation of "mealies" is on foot; and the groups of grazing oxen—"spans," as each team is called—give the animation of animal life which I miss so sadly at every turn in this part of the world.

In Maritzburg itself I only noticed two buildings which made the least effect. One is the Government House, standing in a nice garden, and boasting of a rather pretty porch, but otherwise reminding one, except for the sentinel on duty, of a quiet country rectory. The other is a small block comprising the public offices. The original idea of this square building must have come from a model dairy: but the crowning absurdity of the place is the office of the Colonial Secretary, which stands nearly opposite. I am told that inside it is tolerably comfortable, being the remains of an old Dutch building. Outside it can only be compared to a dilapidated barn on a bankrupt farm; and when it was first pointed out to me I had great difficulty, remembering similar

buildings in other colonies, in believing it was a public office.

The native police look very smart and shining in their white suits, and must be objects of envy to their black brothers, on account of their "knobkerries,"—the knobbed sticks which they alone are permitted to carry officially in their hands; for every native loves a stick, and as they are forbidden to carry either assegais or spears, which are very formidable weapons, or even knobkerries, only one degree less dangerous, they console themselves with a wand or switch, in case of coming across a snake. You never see a Kafir without something of the sort in his hand: if he is not twirling a light stick, then he has a sort of rude reed or pipe from which he extracts sharp and tuneless sounds. As a race the Kafirs make the effect of possessing a fine *physique*, and they walk with an erect bearing and light step, but in true, leisurely, savage fashion. I have seen the black races in four different quarters of the globe, and I never saw one single individual move quickly of his own free will. We must bear in mind, however, that it is a new and altogether revolutionary idea to a Kafir that he should do any work at all. Work is for women: war or idleness for men. Consequently their fixed idea is to do as little as they possibly can, and no Kafir will work after he has earned money enough to buy a sufficient number of wives who will work for him.

"Charlie," our groom, who is by way of being a very fine gentleman, and speaks "Ingiliss" after a strange

fashion of his own, only condescends to work until he can purchase a wife. Unfortunately the damsel whom he prefers is a costly article: her parents demand ten cows, a kettle, and a native hut as the price of her hand, or hands rather. So Charlie grunts and groans through about as much daily work as an English boy of twelve years old could manage easily. He is a very amusing character, being exceedingly proud, and will only obey his own master. He is always lamenting the advent of the Inkosa-casa, or chieftainess, and the piccaninies, and their followings, especially the "vaiter," whom he detests. In his way Charlie is a wag, and it is as good as a play to see his pretence of stupidity when the "vaiter," or French butler, desires him to go and eat "sa paniche." Charlie understands perfectly that he is told to go and get his breakfast of mealy porridge. But he won't admit that it is to be called "paniche," preferring his own word, "scoff:" so he shakes his head violently, and says, "Ka, kabo, paniche:" then with many nods "Scoff, ja," and so in this strange gibberish of three languages, he and the Frenchman carry on quite a pretty quarrel. Charlie also "mocks himself" of the other servants, I am assured, and asserts that he is the "Induna," or head-man. He freely boxes the ears of Jack, the Zulu refugee—poor Jack, who fled from his own country, next door, the other day, and arrived here clad in only a short flap, made of three buck's tails. That is only a month ago, and Jack is already quite a *petit maître* about his clothes. He ordinarily wears

a suit of knickerbocker trousers and a shirt of blue check, bound with red, and a string of beads round his neck; but he cries like a baby if he tears his clothes, or, still worse, if the colour of the red braid washes out. At first he hated civilized garments, even when they were only two in number, and begged to be allowed to assume a sack with holes for the arms, which is the Kafir compromise when near a town, between clothes and flaps made of the skins of wild beasts, or strips of hide. But he soon came to delight in them, and is now always begging for "something to wear."

I confess I am sorry for Jack: he is the kitchen boy, and is learning, with much pains and difficulty, the *wrong language!* My cook is also French, and all she teaches Jack is French, not English. I imagine poor Jack's dismay when his three years' apprenticeship to us is ended, and he seeks perhaps to better himself, and finds no one except Madame can understand him. Most of the dialogues are carried on by pantomime, and the incessant use, in different tones of voice, of the word "ja." Jack is a big loutish young man, but very ugly and feeble, and apparently under the impression that he is perpetually "wanted" to answer for the little indiscretion, whatever it was, on account of which he was forced to flee over the border, for he is timid and scared to the last degree, and nervously anxious to please, if it does not entail too much exertion. He is, as it were, apprenticed to us for three years; we are bound to feed, and clothe,

and doctor him, and he is to work for us, in his own lazy fashion, for small wages. The first time Jack broke a plate his terror and despair were quite edifying to behold. Madame called him a *maladroit* on the spot. Jack learned this word, and after his work was over, seated himself gravely on the ground with the fragments of the plate, which he tried to join together, but gave up the attempt at last, announcing in his own tongue that it was "dead." After a little consideration he said slowly several times, "Maldran ja," and hit himself a good thump at each "ja." Now, I grieve to say, Jack breaks plates, dishes, and cups with a perfectly easy and unembarrassed conscience, and is already far too civilized to care in the least for his misfortunes in that line. Whenever a fowl is killed, —and, oh, I came upon Jack slowly killing one the other day with a pair of nail-scissors!—he possesses himself of a small store of feathers, which he wears tastefully placed over his left ear. A gay ribbon is what they really love, worn like a bandeau across the forehead. Jack is immensely proud of a tawdry ribbon of many colours with a golden ground, which I found for him the other day; only he never can make up his mind where to wear it, and I often come upon him sitting in the shade, with the ribbon in his hands, gravely considering the question.

The pickle and plague of the establishment however is the boy Tom, a grinning young savage, fresh from his kraal, up to any amount of mischief, who in an evil hour was engaged as the baby's body servant.

I cannot trust him with the child out of my sight for a moment, for he "snuffs" enormously, and smokes coarse tobacco out of a cow's horn, and is anxious to teach the baby both these accomplishments. Tom wears his snuff-box, which is a brass cylinder a couple of inches long, in either ear impartially, there being huge slits in the cartilage for the purpose, and the baby never rests till he gets possession of it, and sneezes himself nearly into fits. Tom likes nursing the baby immensely, and crows to him in a strange buzzing way which lulls baby to sleep invariably. He is very anxious however to acquire some words of English, and I was much startled the other day to hear in the verandah *my own voice* saying, "What is it, dear?" over and over again. This phrase proceeded from Tom, who kept on repeating it parrot-fashion; an exact imitation, but with no idea of its meaning. I had heard the baby whimpering a little time before, and Tom had remarked that these four words produced the happiest effect in restoring good humour, so he learned them, accent and all, on the spot, and used them as a spell or charm the next opportunity. I think even the poor baby was puzzled.

But one cannot feel sure of what he will do next. A few evenings ago I trusted Tom to wheel the perambulator about the garden paths, but becoming anxious in a very few minutes to know what he was about, I went to look for him. I found Tom grinning in high glee, and watching the baby's efforts at

cutting his teeth on a live young bird. Master Tom had spied a nest, climbed the tree, and brought down the poor little bird, which he presented to the child, who instantly put it in his mouth. When I arrived on the scene, baby's mouth was full of feathers, over which he was making a very disgusted face, and the unhappy bird was almost dead from fright and squeezing, whilst Tom was in such convulsions of laughter that I nearly boxed his ears. He showed me by signs how baby had insisted on sucking the bird's head, and conveyed his intense amusement at the idea. I made Master Tom climb the tree instantly and put the poor little half-dead creature back into its nest, and sent for Charlie to explain to him that he should have no supper, the only punishment Tom dreads, for two days. I often think however that I must try and find another penalty, for when Tom's allowance of supper is stopped he requisitions every one else's, and so gets rather more than usual. These Kafir lads make excellent nurse-boys generally, and English children are very fond of them. Nurse-girls are rare, as the Kafir women begin their lives of toil so early that they are never very handy or gentle in a house, and boys are easier to train as servants. I heard to-day however of an excellent Kafir nurse-maid, who was the daughter of a chief, and whose only drawback was the size of her family. She was actually and truly one of *eighty* brothers and sisters, her father being a rich man, with twenty-five wives. That simply means that he had



"TOM."—*Page* 66.

twenty-five devoted slaves, who worked morning, noon and night, in field and mealy-patch, for him, without wages. Jack, the Zulu, wanted to be nurse-boy dreadfully instead of Tom, and used to follow nurse about with a towel rolled up into a bundle, and another towel arranged as drapery, dandling an imaginary baby on his arm, saying plaintively, "Piccaniny, piccaniny!" This, nurse translated to mean that he was an experienced nurse, and had taken care of a baby in his own country; but as I had no confidence in "*maladroit*" Jack, and as he was very deaf besides, he had to be ruthlessly relegated to his pots and pans.

It is very curious to see the cast-off clothes of all the armies of Europe finding their way hither. The natives of South Africa prefer an old uniform coat, or tunic, to any other covering, and the effect of a short scarlet garment, when worn with bare legs, is irresistibly droll. The apparently inexhaustible supply of old-fashioned English coatees, with their worsted epaulettes, is only just coming to an end here, and is succeeded by an influx of ragged red tunics of franc-tireurs, green jackets, and much-worn Prussian grey coats. Kafirland may be looked upon as the old clothes-shop of all the fighting world, for, sooner or later, every cast-off scrap of soldier's clothing drifts towards it. Charlie prides himself much upon the possession of an old grey greatcoat, so patched and faded that it may well have been one of those which toiled up the slopes of Inkerman that rainy

Sunday morning twenty years ago; while scampish Tom got well chaffed the other day for suddenly making his appearance clad in a stained red tunic, with buff collar and cuffs, and the number of the old "dirty half hundred" in tarnished metal on the shoulder scales. "Sir Garnet!" cried Charlie the witty, whilst Jack affected to prostrate himself before the grinning imp, exclaiming, "O great Inkosi!"

I have been so exceedingly busy this month unpacking and settling and arranging, that there has been but little time for going about and seeing the rather pretty environs of Maritzburg; besides which, the weather is dead against excursions, changing as it does to rain or threatening thunder-storms every afternoon. One evening we ventured out for a walk, in spite of growlings, and spittings up above among the cross-looking clouds. Natal is not a nice country, for women at all events, to walk about in: you have to keep religiously to the road or track; for woe be to the rash person who ventures on the grass, though from repeated burnings all about these hills it is quite short. There is a risk of your treading on a snake, and a certainty of your treading on a frog. You will soon find your legs covered with small and pertinacious ticks, who have apparently taken a "header" into your flesh, and made up their minds to die sooner than let go. They must be the bulldogs of the insect race, these ticks, for a sharp needle will scarcely dislodge them. At the last extremity of extraction they only burrow their heads deeper into the skin,

and alarm we were all in in England three years ago when coals rose to 2*l.* 10*s.* per ton, and think how cheap I should consider that price for fuel here, I can't help a melancholy smile. Besides the price of fuel, provisions of all sorts seem to me to be dear. Milk is sold by the quart bottle: it is now fourpence per bottle, but rises to sixpence during the winter. Meat is eightpence a pound; and it is so thin and bony, and of such indifferent quality, that there is very little saving in that respect. I have not tasted any really good butter since we arrived; and we pay 2*s.* a pound for cheesy, rancid stuff. I hear that "mealies"—the crushed maize—are also much more expensive than they used to be, and so is forage for the horses. Instead of the horses being left out night and day, summer and winter, as they used to be in New Zealand, with an occasional feed of oats for a treat, they need to be carefully housed at night, and well fed with oaten straw and mealies, to secure them from the mysterious and fatal "horse sickness" which kills them in a few hours. I am told that far up in the country food and fuel are cheap and good, and that it is the dearness and difficulty of transport which forces Maritzburg to depend for its supplies entirely on what is grown in its own immediate vicinity, where there is not very much land under cultivation; so we must look to the coming railway to remedy all evils.

If only one could eat flowers, or if wheat and other cereals grew as freely and luxuriously as flowers grow, how different it would be! On the open grassy downs

about here the blossoms are lovely: beautiful lilies, in scarlet and white clusters, several sorts of periwinkles, heaths, cinerarias, both purple and white, and golden bushes of the citisus, or Cape broom, load the air with fragrance. By the side of every *spruit*, or brook, one sees clumps of tall arum lilies, filling every little water-washed hollow in the bank, and the ferns, which make each ditch and water-course green and plumy, have a separate shady beauty of their own. This is all in Nature's own free open garden, and when the least cultivation is added to her bounteous luxuriance a magnificent garden for fruit, vegetables, and flowers is the result—always supposing you are fortunate enough to be able to induce these lazy Kafirs to dig the ground for you.

About a fortnight ago I braved the dirt and disagreeables of a cross-country walk in showery weather—for we have not been able to meet with a horse to suit us yet—and went to see a beautiful garden a couple of miles away. It was approached by a long double avenue of blue gum-trees, planted only nine years ago, but tall and stately as though a century had passed over their lofty, pointed heads, and with a broad red clay road running between the parallel lines of trees.

The ordinary practice of clearing away the grass as much as possible round a house, strikes an English eye as bare and odd; but when one hears that it is done to avoid affording a cover for snakes, it becomes a necessary and harmonious adjunct to the rest of the

scene. In this instance I found these broad smooth walks, with their deep rich red colour, a very beautiful contrast to the glow of brilliant blossoms in the enormous flower-beds. For this garden was not at all like an ordinary garden, still less like a prim English parterre. The beds were as large as small fields, slightly raised, and bordered by a thick edging of violets; great shrubs of beautiful semi-tropical plants made tangled heaps of purple, scarlet, and white blossoms on every side; the large creamy bells of the datura drooped towards the red earth: and many shrubs of that odd bluish green peculiar to Australian foliage flourished side by side with the sombre-leaved myrtle. Every plant grew in the most liberal fashion; green things which we are accustomed to see in England in small pots shoot up here to the height of laurel bushes. A screen of scarlet euphorbia made a brilliant pyramid against a background formed by a hedge of shell-like cluster roses; and each pillar of the verandah of the little house had its own magnificent creeper. Up one standard an ipomea twined closely; another pillar was hidden by the luxuriance of a trumpet honeysuckle: whilst a third was thickly covered by an immense passion-flower. In shady damp places grew many varieties of ferns and blue hydrangeas, whilst other beds were filled by gay patches of verbenas of every hue and shade. The sweet-scented verbena is one of the most successful and commonest shrubs in a Natal garden; and just now the large bushes of it which one sees in every

direction are covered by projecting spikes of its tiny white blossom.

But the feature of this garden was roses: roses on each side, whichever way you turned, and I should think of at least a hundred different sorts. Not the stiff standard rose-tree of an English garden, with its few precious blossoms to be looked at from a distance and admired with respectful gravity. No: in this garden the roses grow as they might have grown in Eden,—untrained, unpruned, in enormous bushes covered entirely by magnificent blossoms, each bloom of which would have won a prize at a rose show. There was one cloth-of-gold rose-bush that I shall never forget: its size, its fragrance, its wealth of creamy, yellowish blossoms. A few yards off stood a still bigger and more luxuriant plant, some ten feet high, covered with the large delicate and regular pinkish bloom of the *Souvenir de Malmaison*. When I talk of "*a* bush," I only mean the especial bush which caught my eye: I suppose there were fifty cloth-of-gold and fifty *Souvenir* rose-bushes in that garden. Red roses, white roses, tea roses, blush roses, moss roses, and last, not least, the dear old-fashioned homely cabbage rose, sweetest and most sturdy of all. You could wander for acres and acres among fruit trees and plantations of oaks and willows and other trees, but you never got away from the roses. There they were, beautiful delicious things, at every turn; hedges of them, screens of them, and giant bushes of them on either hand.

As I have said before, though kept free from weeds by some half-dozen scantily-clad but stalwart Kafirs, with their awkward hoes, it was not a bit like a trim English garden. It was like a garden in which Lalla Rookh might have wandered by moonlight talking sentimentally with her minstrel lover, under old Fadladeen's chaperonage; or a garden that Boccaccio might have peopled with his Arcadian fine ladies and gentlemen. It was emphatically a poet's or a painter's garden, not a gardener's garden. Then, as though nothing should be wanting to make the scene lovely, one could hear through the fragrant silence the tinkling of the little spruit, or brook, at the bottom of the garden, and the sweet song of the "Cape canary," —the same sort of greenish finch which is the parent stock of all canaries, and whose acquaintance I first made in Madeira: a very sweet warble it is, and the clear flute-like notes sounded so pretty among the roses. From blossom to blossom lovely butterflies flitted, perching quite fearlessly on the red clay walk just before me, folding and unfolding their big painted wings.

Every day I see a new kind of butterfly, and the moths which one comes upon, hidden away under the leaves of the creepers during the bright noisy day, are lovely beyond the power of words. One little fellow is a great pet of mine. He wears pure white wings, with vermilion stripes drawn in regular horizontal lines across his back, and between the lines are shorter broken strokes of black, which is at once neat and

uncommon: but he is always in the last stage of sleepiness when I see him. I am so glad little G—— is not old enough to want to catch them all, and impale them upon corks in a glass case; so the pretty creatures live out their brief and happy life in the sunshine, without let or hindrance from him.

The subject of which my mind is most full just now is the purchase of a horse. F—— has a fairly good chestnut cob of his own; G—— has become possessed, to his intense delight, of an aged and long-suffering Basuto pony, whom he fidgets to death during the day by driving him all over the place, declaring he is "only showing him where the nicest grass grows;" but I want a steed to draw my pony carriage and to carry me. F—— and I are at daggers drawn on this question. He wants to buy me a young, handsome, showy horse, of whom his admirers predict that "he will steady down *presently*," whilst my affections are firmly fixed on an aged screw, who would not turn his head if an Armstrong gun were fired behind him. His owner says my favourite is rising eleven. F—— declares the horse will never see his twentieth birth-day again. F—— points out to me that my steed has had rough times apparently, in his distant youth, and that he is strangely battered about the head, and has a large notch out of one ear. I retaliate by reminding him how sagely the old horse picked his way, with a precision of judgment which only years can give, through the morass which lies at the foot of the hill, and which must be crossed every

time I go into town (and there is nowhere else to go). That morass is a bog in summer, and a honey-comb of deep ruts and holes in winter, which, you must bear in mind, is the dry season here.

Besides his tact in the matter of the morass, did I not drive my old horse the other day to the park, and did he not comport himself in the most delightfully sedate fashion? You require experience to be on the look out for the perils of the Maritzburg streets, for all their sleepy, deserted, tumble-down air. First of all there are the transport waggons, with their long span of oxen straggling all across the road, and a nervous bullock precipitating himself under your horse's nose. The driver too generally takes the opportunity of a carriage passing him to crack his whip, violently enough to startle any horse, except my new purchase. Then when you have passed the place where the waggons most do congregate, and think you are tolerably safe, and need only to look out for ruts and holes in the street, lo! a furious galloping behind you, and some half-dozen of the "gilded youth" of Maritzburg dash past you, stop, wheel round, and gallop past again, until you are almost blinded with dust or smothered with mud, according to the season.

When the park was reached at last, across a frail and uncertain wooden bridge, shaded by large weeping willows, I found it the most creditable thing I have yet seen. It is admirably laid out, the natural undulations of the ground being made the most of, and

exceedingly well kept. This in itself is a difficult matter where all vegetation runs up like Jack's famous bean-stalk, and where the old proverb about the steed starving whilst the grass is growing falls completely to the ground. There are numerous drives, made level by a coating of smooth black shale, and bordered by a double line of syringas and oaks, with hedges of myrtle and pomegranate. In some places the roads run alongside of the little river,—a very muddy torrent when I saw it,—and then the oaks give way to great drooping willows, beneath whose trailing branches the river swirled angrily. On fine Saturday afternoons the band of the regiment stationed here plays on a cleared space under some shady trees,—for you can never sit or stand on the grass in Natal, and even croquet is played on the bare, levelled earth,—and everybody rides or walks or drives about. When I saw the park there was not a living creature in it, for it was, as most of our summer afternoons are, wet and cold and drizzling; but considering there was no thunder-storm likely to break over our heads that day, I felt that I could afford to despise a silent Scotch mist.

We varied our afternoon weather last week by a hail-storm, of which the stones were as big as large marbles. I was scoffed at for remarking this, and assured "it was nothing, absolutely nothing," to *the* great hail-storm of two years ago, which broke nearly every tile and pane of glass in Maritzburg, and left the town looking precisely as though it had been

bombarded. I have seen photographs of some of the ruined houses, and it is certainly difficult to believe that hail could have done so much mischief. Then again stories reach me of a certain thunder-storm, one Sunday evening, just before I arrived, in which the lightning struck a room in which a family were assembled at evening prayers, killing the poor old father with the bible in his hand, and knocked over every member of the little congregation. My informant said, "I assure you it seemed as though the lightning was poured out of heaven from a jug. There were no distinct flashes: the heavens appeared to split open and pour down a flood of blazing violet light." I have seen nothing like this yet, but can quite realize what such a storm must be like, for I have observed already how different the colour of the lightning is. The flashes I have seen were exactly of the lilac colour he described, and they followed each other with a rapidity of succession unknown in less electric regions.

And yet my last English letters were full of complaints of the wet weather in London, and much self-pity for the long imprisonment indoors. Why, those very people don't know what weather inconveniences are! If London streets *are* muddy, at all events there are no dangerous morasses in them. No matter how much it rains, people get their comfortable meals three times a day. Here rain means a risk of starvation, if the little wooden bridge between us and town were to be swept away, and a certainty of short

commons. A wet morning means damp bread for breakfast, and a thousand other disagreeables. No: I have no patience with you pampered Londoners, who want perpetual sunshine in addition to your other blessings, without saying a word about discomfort! You are all much too civilized and luxurious, and your lives are made far too smooth for you altogether. Come out here, and try to keep house on the top of a hill, with servants whose language you don't understand, a couple of children, and a small income; and then, as dear Mark Twain says, "you will know something about woe."

LETTER V.

TURNING A SOD.

DURBAN, *January* 3, 1876.

I MUST certainly begin this letter by setting aside every other topic for the moment and telling you of our grand event, our national celebration, our historical New-Year's Day! We have "turned our first sod" of our first inland railway, and, if I am correctly informed, at least a dozen sods more; but you must remember, if you please, that our navvies are Kafirs, and they do *not* understand what Mr. Carlyle calls the beauty and dignity of labour in the least. It is all very well for you conceited dwellers in the Old and New Worlds to laugh at us for making such a fuss about a projected hundred miles of railway—you whose countries are made into dissected maps by the magic iron lines; but for poor us, who have to drag every pound of sugar and reel of sewing cotton over some sixty miles of vile road between this and Maritzburg, such a line, if it be ever finished, would be a boon and a blessing indeed.

I think I can better make you understand *how* great, if I describe my journeys up and down: journeys made, too, under exceptionally favourable circumstances. The first thing which had to be done some three weeks before the day of our departure, was to pack and send down by waggon a couple of portmanteaus with our smart clothes. I may as well mention here that the cost of transit came to fourteen shillings each way for these light and small packages, and that on each occasion we were separated from our possessions for a fortnight and more. The next step to be taken was to secure places in the daily post-cart, and it required as much mingled firmness and persuasion to do this as though it had reference to a political crisis. But then there were some hundreds of us Maritzburgians all wanting to be taken down to Durban within the space of a few days, and there was nothing to take us except the post-cart which occupied six hours on the journey, and an omnibus which took ten hours, but afforded more shelter from possible rain and probable sun. Within the two vehicles some twenty people might, at a push, find places, and at least a hundred wanted to go every day of that last week of the old year. I don't know how the others managed: they must have got down somehow, for there they were in great force when the eventful day had arrived.

This first journey was prosperous, deceitfully prosperous, as though it would fain try to persuade us that after all there was a great deal to be said in

favour of a mode of travelling which reminded one of the legends of the glories of the old coaching days. No dust, for there had been heavy rain a day or two before—a perfect summer's day, hot enough in the sun, but not disagreeably hot, as we bowled along, fast as four horses could go, in the face of a soft, balmy summer breeze. We were packed as tightly as we could fit, two of us on the coach box, with the mail-bags under our feet and the driver's elbows in our ribs. The ordinary light dog-cart which daily runs between Maritzburg and Durban was exchanged for a sort of open brake, strong indeed, but very heavy, one would fancy, for the poor horses, who had to scamper along, up and down veldt and berg, over bog and spruit, with this lumbering conveyance at their heels. Not for long though: every seven miles, or even less, we pulled up, sometimes at a tidy inn, where a long table would be set in the open verandah laden with eatables (for driving fast through the air sharpens even the sturdy colonial appetite), sometimes at a lonely shanty by the roadside, from whence a couple of Kafir lads emerged, tugging at the bridles of the fresh horses. But I am bound to say that although each of these teams did a stage twice a day, although they were ill-favoured and ill-groomed, their harness shabby beyond description, and their general appearance forlorn, they were, one and all, in good condition, and did their work in first-rate style. The wheelers were generally large gaunt, and most hideous animals, but the

leaders often were ponies whom one could imagine, under happier circumstances, might be handsome little horses enough, stanch and willing to the last degree. They knew their driver's cheery voice as well as possible, and answered to every cry and shout of encouragement he gave them as we scampered along. Of course each horse had its name, and equally of course "Sir Garnet" was there, in a team with "Lord Gifford" and "Lord Carnarvon" for leaders. Did we come to a steep, steep hillside, up which any respectable English horse would certainly expect to walk in a leisurely and sober fashion? then our driver shook out his reins, blew a ringing blast on his bugle, and cried,

"Walk along, Lord Gifford: think as you've another Victoria Cross to get top o' this hill! Walk along, Lord Carnarvon: you ain't sitting in a Cab'nit Council *here*, you know! Don't leave Sir Garnet to do all the work. Now, my lucky lads: creep up it!" And by the time the lad shrieked out this and a lot more patter, behold we were at the top of the hill, and a fresh lovely landscape lying smiling in the sunshine below us. It was a beautiful country we passed through, but except for a scattered homestead here and there by the roadside, not a sign of a human dwelling on all its green and fertile slopes. How the railway is to drag itself up and round all these thousand and one spurs running into each other, with no distinct valley or flat between, is best known to the engineers and surveyors who have declared it practicable. To

the non-professional eye it seems not only difficult, but impossible. But oh, how it is wanted! All along the road shrill bugle blasts warned the slow trailing ox-waggons, with their naked "fore-looper" at their head, to creep aside out of our way. I counted 120 waggons that day on fifty miles of road. Now if one considers that each of these waggons is drawn by a span of some thirty or forty oxen, one has some faint idea of how such a method of transport must waste and use up the material of the country. Something like ten thousand oxen toil over this one road summer and winter, and what wonder is it, not only that merchandise costs more to fetch up from Durban to Maritzburg than it does to bring out from England, but that beef is dear and bad? As transport pays better than farming, we hear on all sides of farms thrown out of cultivation, and, as a necessary consequence, milk, butter, and so forth, are scarce and poor; and in the neighbourhood of Maritzburg, at least, it is esteemed a favour to let you have either at exorbitant prices and of most inferior quality. When one looks round at these countless acres of splendid grazing land, making a sort of natural park on either hand, it seems like a bad dream to know that we have constantly to use preserved milk and potted meat, as being cheaper and easier to procure than fresh.

No one was in any mood, however, to discuss political economy or any other economy that beautiful day, and we laughed and chatted and ate a great many

luncheons, chiefly of tea and peaches, all the way along. Our driver enlivened the route by pointing out the spots where frightful accidents had occurred to the post-cart on former occasions. "You see that big stone? Well, it wor just there that Langalibalele and Colenso they takes the bits in their teeth, those 'osses do, and they sets off their own pace and their own way. Jim Stanway, he puts his break hard down and his foot upon the reins, but, Lord love you, them beasts would 'a pulled his arms and legs both off before they would give in. So they runs poor Jim's near wheel right up agin that bank, and upsets the whole concern, as neat as needs be, over agin that bit o' bog. Anybody hurt? Well, yes. They was all what you might call shook. Mr. Bell he had his arm broken, and a foreign chap from the di'mond fields he gets killed outright, and Jim himself had his head cut open. It was a bad business, you bet, and rough upon Jim—*ja!*"

All the driver's conversation is interlarded with "*ja*," but he never says a worse word than that, and he drinks nothing but tea; as for a pipe or cigar, even when it is offered to him, he screws up his queer face into a droll grimace, and says, "No: thanks. I want all my nerves, I do on this bit o' road. Walk along, Lady Barker; I'm ashamed of you, I am, hanging your head like that at a bit of a hill." It was rather startling to hear this apostrophe all of a sudden, but as my namesake was a very hard-working little brown mare, I could only laugh and declare myself much flattered.

Here we are at last amid the tropical vegetation, which makes a green and tangled girdle around Durban for a dozen miles inland. Yonder is the white and foaming line of breakers which marks where the strong current, sweeping down the east coast, brings along with it all the sand and silt it can collect, especially from the mouth of the Umgeni River close by, and so forms the dreaded bar, which divides the outer from the inner harbour. Beyond this crisp and sparkling line of heaving, tossing snow, stretches the deep indigo blue of the Indian Ocean, whilst over all wonderful sunset tints of opal and flame colour are hovering, and changing with the changing wind-driven clouds. Beneath our wheels are many inches of thick white sand, but the streets are gay and busy with picturesque coolies in their bright cotton draperies, and swiftly-passing Cape carts and vehicles of all sorts. We are in Durban indeed—Durban in unwonted holiday dress, and on the tippest tip-toe of expectation and excitement. A Cape cart, with a Chinese coolie driver and four horses, apparently put in and harnessed together for the first time, was waiting for us and our luggage at the Post-office. We got into it and straightway began to plunge through the sandy streets; once more turned off the high road, and beginning almost immediately to climb with pain and difficulty the red sandy slopes of the "Berea," a beautiful wooded upland dotted with villas. The road is terrible for man and beast, and we had to stop every few yards to breathe the

horses. At last our destination was reached through fields of sugar-cane and plantations of coffee, past luxuriant fruit-trees, rustling broad-leaved bananas, and encroaching greenery of all sorts, to a clearing where a really handsome house stands with hospitable wide-open doors awaiting us. Yes, a good big bath first, then a cup of tea, and now we are ready for a saunter in the twilight on the wide level terrace (called by the ugly old Dutch name, "stoup") which runs round three sides of the house. How green and fragrant and still it all is! Straightway the glare of the long sunny day, the rattle and jolting of the post-cart, the toil through the sand, all slip away from mind and memory, and the tranquil, delicious present slips in to soothe and calm our jaded senses. Certainly it is hotter than Maritzburg. *That* assertion we are prepared to die in defence of; but we acknowledge that the heat at this hour is not oppressive and the tropical luxuriance of leaf and flower all around is worth a few extra degrees of temperature. Of course our talk is of to-morrow, and we look anxiously at the purpling clouds to the west.

"A fine day?" says our host; "and so it ought to be, with 5,000 people come from far and wide to see the sight. Why that is more than a quarter of the entire white population of Natal!"

Bed and sleep become very attractive suggestions, though made indecently soon after dinner, and it was somewhere about ten o'clock when they were carried out; and like Lord Houghton's famous fair

little girl, we "knew nothing more till again it was day."

A fine day, too, is this New-Year's Day of 1876—a glorious day! sunny, of course, but with a delicious breeze stealing among the flowers and shrubs in capricious puffs, and snatching a different scent from each cluster of blossom it visited. By midday F—— has got himself into his gold-laced coat, and I, too, have donned my best gown, but am horrified to find how much a smart bonnet (the first time I have needed to wear one since I left England) sets off and brings out the shades of tan in a sun-browned face. For a moment I entertain the idea of retreating once more to the protecting depths of my old shady hat, but a strong conviction of the duty one owes to a "first sod," and the consoling reflection that after all everybody will be equally brown (a fallacy by the way—the Durban beauties looked very blanched by this hot summer weather) supported me, and I followed F—— and his cocked hat into the waiting carriage.

No need to say where we are to go; all roads lead to the first sod to-day. We are just a moment late. F—— has to get out of the carriage, and plunge into the sand, madly rushing off to find and fall into his place in the procession, whilst we turn off to secure our seats in the grand stand. But before we take them, I must go and look at the wheelbarrow and spade, and, above all, at the first sod. For some weeks past it has been a favourite chaff with us Maritzburgians to offer to bring a fresh lively young

sod down with us, but we were indignantly assured that Durban could furnish one. Here it is: exactly under the triumphal arch! looking very faded and depressed, with a little sun-burned grass growing feebly upon it—but still a genuine sod, and no mistake. The wheelbarrow was really beautiful, made of native woods, with their astounding names. All three specimens of the hardest and handsomest yellow woods were there, and they were described to me as "stink wood, breeze wood, and sneeze wood." The rich yellow of the wood is veined by handsome dark streaks, with "1876" inlaid in large black figures in the centre. The spade was just a common spade, and could not by any possibility be called anything else. But there is no time to linger and laugh any longer beneath all these fluttering streamers and waving boughs, for here are the Natal Carbineers, a plucky little handful of smart light horse, clad in blue and silver, who have marched at their own charges all the way down from Maritzburg, to help to keep the ground this fine New-Year's Day. Next come a strong body of Kafir police, trudging along through the dust, with their odd shuffling gait, bended knees, bare legs, bodies leaning forward, and keeping step and time by means of a queer sort of barbaric hum or grunt.

Policemen are no more necessary than my best bonnet. They are only there on the same grounds,—for the honour and glory of the thing. The crowd is kept in order by somebody here and there with a

be-ribboned wand, for it is the most orderly and respectable crowd you ever saw. In fact, such a crowd would be an impossibility in England, or any higher civilised country. There were no dodging vagrants, no slatternly women, no squalid, starving babies. In fact, our civilisation has not yet mounted to effervescence, so we have no dregs. Every white person on the ground was well clad, well fed, and apparently well to do. The "lower orders" were represented by a bright fringe of Coolies and Kafirs, sleek, grinning, and as fat as ortolans, especially the babies. Most of the Kafirs were dressed in snowy-white knickerbockers, and shirts bordered by a band of gay colour, and with a fillet of scarlet ribbon tied tightly round their heads; whilst the Coolies shone out like a shifting bed of tulips, so bright were the women's "chuddahs" and the men's jackets. All looked smiling, healthy, and happy, and the public enthusiasm and good humour rose to its height when, to the sound of a vigorous band (it is early yet in the day, remember) of flute and trombone, a perfect Lilliputian mob of toddling children came on the ground. These little people were all in their cleanest white frocks and prettiest hats. They clung to each other, and to their garlands and staves of flowers until the tangled mob reminded one of a May-day *fête;* not that any English May-day of my acquaintance could produce such a lavish profusion of roses and buds and blossoms of every hue and tint, to say nothing of sun and sky.

The children's corner was literally like a garden and nothing could be prettier than the effect of their little voices striking up through the summer air, as, obedient to a lifted wand, they burst into the chorus of the National Anthem when the Governor and Mayor drove up. Cheers from white throats, gruff, loud shouts all together of "Bayete!" (the royal salute) and "Inkos" (chieftain) from black throats, yells expressive of excitement and general good fellowship from throats of all colours: then a moment's solemn pause, a hushed silence, bared heads, and the loud clear tones of a very old pastor in the land are heard imploring the blessing of Almighty God on this our undertaking. Again the sweet childish trebles rose into the sunshine in a chanted Amen; and then there were salutes from cannon and *feu-de-joies* from carbines, and more shoutings, and all the cocked hats were to be seen bowing; and then one more tremendous burst of cheering told that *the* sod was cut and turned and trundled, and finally pitched out of the barrow back again upon the dusty soil, all in the most artistic and satisfactory fashion.

"There are the Kafir navvies: they are *really* going to work now!"—this latter with great surprise, for a Kafir *really* working, now or ever, would indeed have been the raree-show of the day. But this natural phenomenon was left to develop itself in solitude, for the crowd began to reassemble into processions, and generally to find its way back under shelter from sun and dust. The 500 children were

heralded and marched off to the tune of one of their own pretty hymns, to where unlimited buns and tea awaited them; and we elders betook ourselves to the grateful shade and coolness of the flower-decked new Market Hall, open to-day for the first time, and turned by flags and ferns and lavish wealth of what would in England be costliest hothouse flowers, into a charming banqueting hall. All these exquisite ferns and blossoms cost far less than the string and nails which fastened them against the walls, and their fresh fragrance and greenery struck gratefully on our sun-baked eyes, as we found our way into the big room. Nothing could be more creditable to a young colony than the way everything was arranged, for the difficulties in one's culinary path in Natal are hardly to be appreciated by English housekeepers. At one time there threatened to be almost a famine in Durban, for besides the pressure of all these extra mouths of visitors to feed, there was this enormous luncheon, with some 500 hungry people to be provided for. It seems so strange, that with every facility for rearing poultry all around, it should be scarce and dear, and when brought to market, as thin as possible. The same may be said of vegetables: they need no culture beyond being put into the ground, and yet unless you have a garden of your own, it is very difficult to get anything like a proper supply. I heard nothing but wails from distracted housekeepers about the price and scarcity of food that week.

The luncheon, however, showed no sign of scarcity,

and I was much amazed at the substantial and homely character of the *menu*, which included cold baked sucking-pig among its delicacies. A favourite specimen of the confectioner's art that day consisted of a sort of solid brick of plum pudding, with for legend "The First Sod," tastefully picked out in white almonds on its dark surface. But it was a capital luncheon, and so soon as the Mayor had succeeded in impressing on the band that they were not expected to play all the time the speeches were being made, everything went on very well. Some of the speeches were short, but oh, far, far too many were long—terribly long, and the whole affair was not over before five o'clock! The only real want of the entertainment was ice. It seems so hard not to have it in a climate which can produce such burning days, for those tiresome cheap little ice-machines with crystals are of no use whatever. I got one which made ice (under pressure of much turning) in the shop where it was bought, but it has never made any here, and my experience is that of everybody else's. Why there should not be an ice-making, or an ice-importing company, no one knows, except that there is so little energy or enterprise here, and that everything is dawdly and uncomfortable because it seems too much trouble to take pains to supply wants. It is the same everywhere throughout the colony. Sandy roads, with plenty of excellent materials for hardening them close by; no fish to be bought, because no one will take the trouble of going out to catch them. But

I had better stop scribbling, for I am evidently getting *cross and tired after my long day of unwonted festivity.* It is partly the oppression of my smart bonnet, and partly the length of the speeches, which has wearied me out so thoroughly.

MARITZBURG, *January* 6.

Nothing could afford a greater contrast than our return journey. It was the other extreme of discomfort and misery, and must surely have been sent to make us appreciate and long for the completion of this very railway. We waited a day beyond that fixed for our return, in order to give the effects of a most terrific thunderstorm time to pass away; but it was succeeded by a perfect deluge of rain. Rain is not supposed to last long at this season of the year, but all I can say is that this rain did last. When the third day came, and brought no sign of clearing up with it, and very little dawn to speak of, we agreed to delay no longer, besides which our places in the post-cart could not be again exchanged as had previously been done, for the stream of returning visitors was setting strongly towards Maritzburg, and we might be detained for a week longer if we did not go at once. Accordingly we presented ourselves at the Durban Post-office a few minutes before noon, and took our places in the post-cart. My seat was on the box, and as I flattered myself that I was well wrapped up I did not feel at all alarmed at the prospect of a

cold, wet drive. Who would believe that twenty-four hours ago one could hardly endure a white muslin dressing-gown? Who would believe that twenty-four hours ago a lace shawl was an oppressive wrap, and that the serious object of my envy and admiration, all these hot days on the Berea, has been a fat Abyssinian baby, as black as a coal, and the strongest and biggest child of six months old I ever saw? That sleek and grinning infant's toilette consisted of a string of blue beads round its neck, and in this cool and airy costume it used to pervade the house, walking about on all fours exactly like a monkey, for of course it could not stand. Yes: how cold that baby must be to-day; but if it is, its mother has probably tied it behind her in an old shawl, and it is nestling close to her fat broad back, fast asleep.

But the black baby is certainly a most unwarrantable digression, and we must return to our post-cart. The discouraging part of it was that the vehicle itself had been out in all the storm and rain of yesterday. Of course no one had dreamed of washing or wiping it out in any fashion, so we had to sit upon wet cushions and put our feet at once into a pool of red mud and water. Now, if I must confess the truth, I, an old traveller, had done a very stupid thing. I had been lured by the deceitful beauty of the weather when we started into leaving behind me everything except the thinnest and coolest garments I possessed, and therefore had to set out on this journey, in the teeth

of a cold wind and driving rain, clad in a white gown! It is true I had my beloved and most useful Ulster, but it was a light waterproof one, and just about half enough in the way of warmth. Still as I had another wrap, a big Scotch plaid, I should have got on very well if it had not been for the still greater stupidity of the only other female fellow-passenger, who was calmly going to take her place in the open post-cart, behind me, in a brown holland gown, without a scarf, or wrap, or anything whatever to shelter her from the weather, except a white calico sunshade! She was a Frenchwoman, too, and looked so piteous and forlorn in her neat toilette, that of course I could do nothing less than lend her my Scotch shawl, and trust to the driver's friendly promises of corn bags at some future stage.

By the time the bags came, or rather by the time we got to the bags, I was indeed wet and cold. The Ulster did its best, and all that could be expected of it, but no garment manufactured in a London shop could possibly cope with such wild weather,—tropical in the vehemence of its pouring rain, wintry in its cutting blasts. The wind seemed to blow from every quarter of the heavens at once; the rain came down in sheets: but I minded the mud more than either wind or rain,—it was more demoralizing. On the box seat I got my full share and more, but yet I was better off there than inside, where twelve people were squeezed into the places of eight. The horse's feet got balled with the stiff red clay exactly as though it

had been snow, and as they galloped along (six fresh ones at every stage) I received a good lump of clay, as big and nearly as solid as a croquet ball, full in my face. It was bitterly cold, and the night was closing in when we drove up to the door of an hotel in Maritzburg at long past eight instead of six o'clock. Being clearly impossible to get out to our own place that night, there was nothing for it but to stop where we were, and get what food and rest could be coaxed out of an indifferent bill of fare and a bed of stony hardness, to say nothing of the bites of numerous mosquitoes. The morning light revealed the melancholy state of my white gown in its full horror: all the rivers of Natal will never make it white again, I fear! Certainly there *is* much to be said in favour of railway travelling after all, especially in wet weather!

January 10.

Surely I have been doing something else lately besides turning this first sod? Well, not much. You see no one can undertake anything in the way of expeditions or excursions, or even sight-seeing, in summer, partly on account of the heat and partly because of the thunderstorms. We have had a few very severe ones, but we hail them with joy on account of the cool, clear air which succeeds a display of electrical vehemence. We walked home from church a few evenings ago on a very wild and threatening night, and I never shall forget the weird beauty of

the scene. We had started to go to church about six o'clock. The walk was only two miles, and the afternoon calm and cloudless. The day had been oppressively hot, but there were no immediate signs of a storm. Whilst we were in church, however, a fresh breeze sprang up, and drove the clouds rapidly before it. The constant glare of the lightning made every corner of the church as light as day, and the crash of the thunder shook its wooden roof over our heads. But there was no rain yet, and when we came out,—in fear and trembling, I acknowledge, as to how we were to get home,—we could see that the violence of the storm had either passed over, or not reached yet, the valley in which Maritzburg nestles, and was expending itself somewhere else. So I decided that we might venture. As for vehicles to be hired in the streets, there are no such things, and by the time we could have persuaded one to turn out for us,—a very doubtful contingency, and only to be procured to the tune of a sovereign or so,—all the fury of the storm would probably be upon us.

There was nothing for it, therefore, but to walk, and to set out as soon as possible to climb our very steep hill. Instead of the soft, balmy twilight on which we had counted, the sky was of an inky, dense blackness, but for all that we had light enough and to spare. I never saw such lightning! The flashes came literally every second, and lit up the whole heavens and earth with a blinding glare far brighter than any sunshine. So great was the contrast, and so much

more intense the dark after each flash of dazzling light, that we could only venture to walk on *during* the flashes, though one's instinct was rather to stand still, awe-stricken and mute. The thunder growled and crackled incessantly, but far away towards the Inchanga valley. If the wind had shifted ever so little and brought the storm back again, our plight would have been poor indeed, and with this dread upon us we trudged bravely on and breasted the open hill-side with what haste and courage we could. During the rare momentary intervals of darkness we could perceive that the whole place was ablaze with fire-flies. Every blade of grass held a tiny sparkle of its own, but when the lightning shone out with its yellow and violet glare, the pale light of the poor little flies seemed to be quite extinguished. As for the frogs, the clamorous noise they kept up sounded absolutely deafening, and so did the shrill incessant cry of the cicalas.

We reached home safely, and before the rain too, but found all our servants in the verandah, in the last stage of dismay and uncertainty what to do for the best. They had collected waterproofs, umbrellas, and lanterns, but as it was not actually raining yet, and we certainly did not require light on our path,—for they said that every flash showed them our climbing, trudging figures as plainly as possible—it was difficult to know what to do, especially as the Kafirs have, very naturally, an intense horror and dislike to going out in a storm. This storm was not really overhead,

and scarcely deserves mention, but it was the precursor of a severe one next day, of which our valley got the full benefit. It was quite curious to see the dozens of dead butterflies on the garden paths after that second storm. Their beautiful plumage was not dimmed or scorched nor their wings broken. They would have been in perfect order for a collection, yet they were quite dead and stiff."

LETTER VI.

PLAY AND BUSINESS.

January 14.

A FEW days ago we took G—— to see the annual swimming sports in the small river which runs through the park. It was a beautiful afternoon, for a wonder, with no lowering thunder-clouds over the hills, so the banks of the river were thronged, for half a mile or more, with spectators. It made a very pretty picture, —the large willow trees drooping into the water on either shore, the gay concourse of people, the bright patch of colour made by the red coats of the band of the regiment stationed across the stream, the tents for the competitors to change in, &c., and the dark wondering faces of Kafir and Coolie, who cannot comprehend *why* white people should take so much trouble, and run so much risk, to amuse themselves. We certainly must appear to them possessed by a restless demon of energy, both in our work and our play, and never more so than on this hot afternoon,

when, amid much shouting and laughing, the various water-races came off.

The steeple-chase amused us a great deal, where the competitors had to swim over and under various barriers across the river; and so did the race for very little boys, which was a full and excellent one. The monkeys took to the water as naturally as fishes, and evidently enjoyed the fun more than any one. Indeed the difficulty was to get them out of the water and into the tents to change their swimming costume, after the race was over. But the most interesting event was one meant to teach volunteers how to swim rivers in case of field service, and the palm lay between the Natal Carbineers and the very smart Mounted Police. At a given signal they all plunged on horseback into the muddy water from a difficult part of the bank, and swam, fully accoutred and carrying their carbines, across the river. It was very interesting to watch how clever the horses were; how some of their riders slipped off their backs the moment they had fairly entered the stream, and swam side by side with their steeds, until the opposite bank was reached, and then how the horses paused to allow their dripping masters to mount again,—no easy task in heavy boots, saturated clothes, and with a carbine in your left hand, which had to be kept dry at all risks and hazards.

When I asked little G—— which part he liked best, he answered without hesitation, "the *assidents*" (Anglicé, accidents); and I am not sure that he was not right, for no one was hurt. The crowd mightily

enjoyed seeing some stalwart citizen in his best clothes suddenly topple from his place of vantage on the deceitfully secure-looking but rotten branch of a tree, and take an involuntary bath in his own despite. When that citizen further chanced to be clad in a suit of bright-coloured velveteen, the effect was much enhanced. It is my private opinion that G—— was longing to distinguish himself in a similar fashion, for I constantly saw him "lying out" on most frail branches, but try as he might, he could not accomplish a tumble.

January 17.

I have had an opportunity lately of attending a Kafir *lit de justice*, and I can only say that if we civilised people managed our legal difficulties in the same way it would be an uncommonly good thing for everybody, except the lawyers. Cows are at the bottom of nearly all the native disputes, and the Kafirs always take their grievance, soberly to the nearest magistrate, who arbitrates to the best of his ability between the disputants. They are generally satisfied with his award, but if the case is an intricate one, or they consider that the question is not really solved, then they have the right of appeal, and it is this Court of Appeal which I have been attending lately. It is held in the newly-built office of the Minister for Native Affairs,—the prettiest and most respectable-looking public office which I have seen in Maritzburg, by the way. Before the erection of this modest but comfortable building, the court used to be held in the open air, under the

shade of some large trees; a more picturesque method certainly, but subject to inconveniences on account of the weather. It is altogether the most primitive and patriarchal style of business one saw, but all the more delightful on that account.

It is inexpressibly touching to see with one's own eyes the wonderful deep personal devotion and affection of the Kafirs for the kindly English gentleman who for thirty years and more has been their real ruler, and their wise and judicious friend; not a friend to pamper their vices and give way to their great fault of idleness, but a true friend to protect their interests, and yet to labour incessantly for their social advancement, and for their admission into the great field of civilised workers. The Kafirs know little, and care less, for all the imposing and elaborate machinery of British rule. The Queen on her throne is but a splendid distant chieftainess to them, and no potentate can, in their eyes, compare with their own Chieftain, their king of hearts, the one white man to whom of their own free will and accord they give the royal salute whenever they see him. I have stood in magnificent halls, and seen King and Kaiser pass through crowds of bowing courtiers, but I never saw anything which impressed me that morning so strongly as the simultaneous springing to the feet, the loud shout of "Bayete!" given with the right hand upraised (a higher form of salutation than "Inkosi," and only accorded to Kafir royalty), the look of love and rapture and satisfied expectation in

all those keen black faces, as the Minister, quite unattended, without pomp or circumstance of any sort or kind, quietly walked into the large room, and sat himself down at his desk, with some papers before him. There was no clerk, no official of any sort; no one standing between the people and the fountain of justice. The extraordinary simplicity of the trial which commenced at once, was only to be equalled by the decorum and dignity with which it was conducted.

First of all everybody sat down upon the floor, the plaintiff and defendant amicably side by side opposite to the Minister's desk, and the other natives, about a hundred in number, squatted in various groups. Then, as there was evidently a slight feeling of surprise at my sitting myself down in the only other chair (they probably considered me a new-fashioned clerk), the Minister explained that I was the wife of another Inkosi, and that I wanted to see and hear how Kafir men stated their case when anything went wrong with their affairs. This explanation was perfectly satisfactory to all parties, and they regarded me no more, but immediately set to work on the subject in hand. A sort of *précis* of each case had been previously prepared from the magistrate's report for Mr. S——'s information by his clerk, and these documents greatly helped me to understand what was going on. No language can be more beautiful to listen to than either the Kafir or Zulu tongue. It is soft and liquid as Italian, with just the same gentle accentuation on the penultimate and anti-penultimate syllables, and

the clicks which are made with the tongue every now and then are part of the language, and give it a very quaint sound, whilst the proper names are excessively harmonious.

In the first case taken, the plaintiff, as I said before, was not quite satisfied with the decision of his own local magistrate, and had therefore come here to re-state his case. The story was slightly complicated by this worthy possessing two distinct names; "Tevula," which he averred, was the name of his boyhood, and "Mazumba," the name of his manhood. The natives have an unconquerable aversion to giving their real names, and will offer half-a-dozen different aliases, making it very difficult to trace them if they are "wanted," and still more difficult to get at the rights of any story they may have to tell. However, if they are ever frank and open to anybody, it is to their own Minister, who speaks their language as well as they do themselves, and who fully understands their mode of reasoning and habit of mind.

Tevula told his story extremely well, I must say; quietly, but earnestly, and with the most perfectly respectful, though manly bearing. He sometimes used graceful and natural gesticulation, but not a bit more than was needed to give emphasis to his oratory. He was a strongly-built, tall man, about thirty-five years of age, dressed in a soldier's great-coat, bare legs and feet, and with nothing on his head except the curious ring into which the men weave their hair. So soon as a youth is considered old enough to assume the duties

and responsibilities of manhood, he begins to weave his woolly hair over a ring of grass, which exactly fits the head, keeping the wool in its place by means of wax. In time it grows perfectly smooth and shining and regular over this foundation, and the effect is as though a ring of jet, or polished ebony, were worn round the brows. Different tribes slightly vary the size and form of the ring, and in this case it was easy to see that the defendant belonged to another tribe, for his ring was half the size, and worn at the summit of a cone of combed back-hair, which was as thick and close as a cap, and indeed looked very like a grizzled fez.

Anybody in court may ask any questions they please, and in fact what we should call cross-examine a witness, but they did not do so whilst I was present. Every one listened attentively, giving a grunt of interest whenever Tevula made a point, and this manifestation of sympathy always seemed to gratify him immensely. But it was plain that whatever might be the decision of the Minister, who listened closely to every word, asking now and then a short question, which evidently hit some logical nail right on the head, they would abide by it, and be satisfied that it was the fairest and most equitable solution of the subject. Here is a *résumé* of the first case, and it is a fair sample of the intricacies attending Kafir law-suits.

Our friend Tevula possessed an aged relative, a certain aunt called Mamusa, who at the present time appears to be in her dotage, and consequently her

evidence is of very little value. But once upon a time, long, long ago, Mamusa was young and generous. Mamusa had cows, and she *gave* or *lent*—there was the difficulty—a couple of heifers to the defendant, whose name I cannot possibly spell, on account of the clicks. Nobody denied that of her own free-will these heifers had been bestowed by Mamusa on the withered-looking little old man squatting opposite, but the question is, were they a loan or a gift? For many years nothing was done about these heifers, but one fine day Tevula gets wind of the story, is immediately seized with a fit of affection for his aged relative, and takes her to live in his kraal, proclaiming himself her protector and heir. So far, so good. All this was in accordance with Kafir custom, and the narration of this part of the story was received with grunts of asseveration and approval by the audience. Indeed, Kafirs are as a rule to be depended upon, and their minds, though full of odd prejudices and quirks, have a natural bias towards truth.

Two or three years ago Tevula began by claiming as heir-at-law, though the old woman still lives, twenty cows from the defendant, as the increase of these heifers. *Now* he demands between thirty and forty. When asked why he only claimed twenty, as nobody denies that the produce of the heifers has increased to double that number, he says naively, but without hesitation, that there is a fee to be paid of a shilling a head on such a claim if established, and that he only had twenty shillings in the world, so, as he

remarked with a knowing twinkle in his eye, "What was the use of my claiming more cows than I had money to pay the fee for?" But times have improved with Tevula since then, and he is now in a position to claim the poor defendant's whole herd, though he generously says he will not insist on his refunding those cows which do not resemble the original heifers, and are not, as they were, dun and red-and-white. This sounded magnanimous, and met with great applause, until the bleared-eyed old defendant remarked hopelessly, "They are all of that colour," which changed the sympathies of the audience once more. Tevula saw this at a glance, and hastened to improve his position by narrating an anecdote.

No words of mine could reproduce the dramatic talent that man displayed in his narration. I did not understand a syllable of his language, and yet I could gather from his gestures, his intonation, and above all from the expression of his hearers' faces, the sort of story he was telling them. After he had finished Mr. S—— turned to me and briefly translated the episode with which Tevula had sought to rivet the attention and sympathies of the court. Tevula's tale, much condensed, was this:—Years ago, when his attention had first been directed to the matter, he went with the defendant out on the veldt to look at the herd. No sooner did the cattle see them approaching than a beautiful little dun-coloured heifer, the exact counterpart of her grandmother, Mamusa's cow, left the others and ran up to him, Tevula, lowing and rubbing her

head against his shoulders, and following him all about like a dog. In vain did her reputed owner strive to drive her away: she persisted in following Tevula all the way back to his kraal, right up to the entrance of his hut. "I was her master, and the 'inkomokazi' knew it," cried Tevula, triumphantly, looking round at the defendant with a knowing nod, as much as to say, "Beat that, if you can!"

Not knowing what answer to make, the defendant took his snuff-box out of his left ear, and solaced himself by three or four huge pinches. I started the hypothesis that Mamusa might have had a *tendresse* for the old gentleman, and might have bestowed these cows upon him as a love-gift, but this idea was scouted even by the defendant, who said gravely, "Kafir women don't buy lovers or husbands: we buy the wife we want." A Kafir girl is exceedingly proud of being bought, and the more she costs the prouder she is. She pities Englishwomen whose bridegrooms expect to receive instead of giving money, and considers a dowry as a most humiliating arrangement.

I wish I could tell you how Mamusa's cows have finally been disposed of, but although it has occupied three days, the case is by no means over yet. I envy and admire Mr. S——'s untiring patience and unfailing good temper, and it is just these qualities which make the Kafirs so certain that their affairs will not be neglected nor their interests suffer in his hands.

Whilst I was listening to Tevula's oratory my eyes and my mind sometimes wandered to the eager and

silent audience, and I amused myself by studying their strange head-dresses. In most instances the men wore their hair in these waxen rings to which I have alluded, but there were several young men present who indulged in purely fancy head-dresses. One stalwart youth had got hold of the round cardboard lid of a collar-box, to which he had affixed two bits of string, and had tied it firmly but jauntily on one side of his head. Another lad had invented a most extraordinary decoration for his wool covered pate. He had procured the intestines of some small animal,—a lamb or a kid,—had cleaned them, and tied them tightly at intervals of an inch or two with string. This series of small, clear bladders he had then inflated, and arranged them in a sort of bouquet on the top of his head, skewering tufts of his crisp hair between, so that the effect resembled a bunch of bubbles, if there could be such a thing. Another very favourite adornment for the head consisted of a strip of gay cloth or ribbon, or even a few bright threads, bound tightly like a fillet across the brows, and confining a tuft of feathers over one ear. But I suspect all these fanciful arrangements were only worn by the gilded youth among the natives, for I noticed that the chieftains and "indunas," or head men of the villages, never had recourse to such frivolities. They wore indeed numerous slender rings of brass or silver wire on their straight, shapely legs, and also necklaces of lions' or tigers' claws and teeth round their throats, but these were trophies of the chase as well as personal ornaments.

LETTER VII.

THE KAFIR AT HOME.

MARITZBURG, *February* 10, 1876.

IN the South African calendar this is set down as the first of the autumnal months, but half a dozen hours of the midday are still quite as close and oppressive as any we have had. I am however bound to say that the nights—at all events up here—are cooler, and I begin even to think of a light shawl for my solitary walks in the verandah just before bed-time. When the moon shines, these walks are pleasant enough, but when only the "common people of the skies" are trying to filter down their feebler light through the misty atmosphere, I have a lurking fear and distrust of the reptiles and insects who may also have a fancy for taking exercise at the same time in the same place. I say nothing of bats, frogs, and toads, mantis, or even huge moths; to these we are quite accustomed. But although I have never seen a live snake in this country myself, still one

hears such unpleasant stories about them, that it is just as well to "mak siccar," as the Scotch say, with a candle, before beginning a consitutional in the dark.

It is not a week ago since a lady of my acquaintance, being surprised at her little dog's refusal to follow her into her bedroom one night, instituted a search for the reason of the poor little creature's terror and dismay, and discovered a snake coiled up under her chest of drawers. At this moment, too, the local papers are full of recipes for the prevention and cure of snake bites, public attention being much attracted to the subject on account of an Englishman having been bitten by a black *mamba* (a venomous adder) some short time since, and having died of the wound in a few hours. In his case, poor man, he does not seem to have had a chance from the first, for besides being obliged to walk some distance to the nearest house, he had to be taken, as they had no proper remedies there, on a further journey of some miles to a hospital. All this exercise and motion caused the poison to circulate freely through the veins, and was the worst possible thing for him. The doctors here seem agreed that the treatment by ammonia and brandy is the safest, and many instances are adduced to show how successful it has been, though one party of curers admits the ammonia, but denies the brandy. On the other hand, one hears of a child bitten by a snake, and swallowing half a large bottle of raw brandy in half an hour, without its

head being at all affected, and what is more, recovering from the bite, and living happy ever after. I keep both remedies close at hand, for three or four venomous snakes have been killed within a dozen yards of the house, and little G—— is perpetually exploring the long grass all around, or hunting for a stray peg-top or cricket-ball in one of those beautiful fern-filled ditches whose tangle of creepers and plumy ferns are exactly the favourite haunts of snakes. As yet he has brought back from these forbidden raids nothing worse than a few ticks and millions of burrs.

As for the ticks, I am getting over my horror at having to dislodge them from among baby's soft curls by means of a drop of sweet oil and a sharp needle, and even G—— only shrieks with laughter at discovering a great swollen monster hanging on by its forceps to his leg. They torment the poor dogs and horses dreadfully, and if the said horses were not the very quietest, meekest, most depressed animals in the world, we should certainly hear of more accidents. As it is, they confine their efforts to get rid of their tormentors to rubbing all the hair off their tails and sides, in patches, against the walls of their stable or the trunk of a tree. Indeed, the clever way G——'s little Basuto pony climbs actually inside a good-sized bush, and sways himself about in it, with his legs off the ground, until the whole thing comes with a crash to the ground, is edifying to behold —to every one except the owner of the tree. Tom,

the Kafir boy, tried hard to persuade me the other day that the pony was to blame for the destruction of a peach tree, but as the only broken-down branches were those which had been laden with fruit, I am inclined to acquit the pony. Carbolic soap is an excellent thing to wash both dogs and horses with, for it not only keeps away flies and ticks from the skin, which is constantly rubbed off by incessant scratching, but helps to heal the tendency to a sore place. Indeed, nothing frightened me so much as what I heard when I first arrived about Natal sores and Natal boils. Everybody told me that ever so slight a cut or abrasion went on slowly festering, and that sores on children's faces were quite common. This sounded very dreadful, but I am beginning to hope it was an exaggeration, for whenever G—— cuts or knocks himself (which is every day or so), or scratches an insect's bite into a bad place, I wash the part with a little carbolic soap (there are two sorts, one for animals, and a more refined preparation for the human skin), and it is quite well next day. We have all had a threatening of those horrid boils, but they have passed off.

In town the mosquitoes are plentiful and lively, devoting their attentions chiefly to new comers; but up here (I write as though we were 5,000 feet, instead of only 50, above Maritzburg) it is rare to see one at all. I think "fillies," are more in our line, and that in spite of every floor in the house being scrubbed daily with strong soda and water. "Fillies," you must know, is our black groom

Charlie's way of pronouncing fleas, and I find it ever so much prettier.

G—— and I are picking up many words of Kafir, though it is quite mortifying to see how much more easily the little monkey learns than I do. I forget my phrases, or confuse them, whereas when he learns two or three sentences he appears to remember them always. It is a very melodious and beautiful language, and, except for the clicks, not very difficult to learn. Almost everybody here speaks it a little, and it is the first thing necessary for a new comer to endeavour to acquire; only unfortunately there are no teachers as in India, and consequently you pick up a wretched, debased kind of patois interlarded with Dutch phrases. Many of the Kafirs about town speak a little English, and they are exceedingly sharp, when they choose, about understanding what is meant, even if they do not quite catch the meaning of the words used. There is one genius of my acquaintance called "Sixpence," who is not only a capital cook, but an accomplished English scholar, having spent some months in England. Generally to the Cape and back is the extent of their journeyings, for they are a home-loving people, but Sixpence went to England with his master, and brought back a shivering recollection of an English winter and a deep-rooted amazement at the boys of the Shoe Brigade, who wanted to clean his boots. That astonished him more than anything else, he says.

The Kafirs are very fond of attending their own

schools and church services, of which there are several in the town; and I find one of my greatest difficulties in living out here consists in getting Kafirs to come out of town, for by so doing they miss their regular attendance at chapel and school. A few Sundays ago I went to one of these Kafir schools, and was much struck by the intensely absorbed air of the pupils, almost all of whom were youths about twenty years of age. They were learning to read the Bible in Kafir during my visit, sitting in couples, and helping each other on with great diligence and earnestness. No looking about, no wandering, inattentive glances did I see. I might as well have "had the receipt of fern seed and walked invisible" for all the attention I excited. Presently the pupil-teacher, a young black man, who had charge of this class, asked me if I would like to hear them sing a hymn, and on my assenting he read out a verse of "Hold the Fort," and they all stood up and sang it, or rather its Kafir translation, lustily and with good courage, though without much tune. There was another class for women and children, but it was a small one.

Certainly the young men seemed much in earnest, and the rapt expression of their faces was most striking, especially during the short prayer which followed the hymn and ended the school for the afternoon. I have heard on all sides since my arrival the advice *not* to take Christian Kafirs into my service, and I am at a loss to know in what way the prejudice against them can have arisen. "Take a Kafir green

from his kraal if you wish to have a good servant," is what every one tells me. It so happens we have two of each—two Christians and two heathens—about the place, and there is no doubt whatever which is the best.

I must say, however, that I like Kafir servants in many respects. They require constant supervision; they require to be told to do the same thing over and over again every day, and what is more, besides telling, you have to stand by and see that they do the thing; they are also very slow: but still with all these disadvantages they are far better than the generality of European servants out here, who make their luckless employers' lives a burthen to them by reason of their tempers and caprices. It is much better, I am convinced, to face the evil boldly and to make up one's mind to have none but Kafir servants. Of course, one immediately turns into a sort of overseer and upper-servant one's-self; but at all events you are master or mistress of your own house, and you have good-tempered, faithful domestics, who do their best, however awkwardly, to please you. When there are children, then a good English nurse is a great boon, and in this one respect I am fortunate. Kafirs are also much easier to manage when the orders come direct from the master or mistress, and they work far more willingly for them than for white servants. Tom, the nurse-boy, whose real name is "Umkabangwana," confided to me yesterday that he hoped to stop in my employment for forty moons;

after that space of time he considered that he should be in a position to buy plenty of wives who would work for him and support him for the rest of his life.

But how Tom or Jack, or any of the boys, in fact, are to save money, I know not, for every shilling of their wages, except a small margin for coarse snuff, goes to their parents who fleece them without mercy. If they are fined for breakages or misconduct (the only punishment a Kafir cares for), they have to account for the deficient money to their stern parent, and both Tom and Jack went through a most graphic pantomime with a stick of the consequences to themselves, adding that their father said both the beating from him and the fine from us served them right for their carelessness. It seemed so hard they should suffer both ways, and they were so good-tempered and uncomplaining about it, that I fear I shall find it very difficult to stop any threepenny pieces out of their wages in future. A Kafir servant usually gets £1 a month, his clothes and food. The clothes consist of a shirt and short trousers of coarse check cotton, a soldier's old great-coat for winter; and the food is plenty of mealie-meal for "scoff." If he is a good servant, and worth making comfortable, you give him a trifle every week to buy meat. They are very fond of going to their kraals, and you have to make them sign an agreement to remain with you so many months, generally six. Often and often by the time you have just taught them with infinite pains

and trouble how to do their work, they depart, and you have to begin it all over again.

I sometimes see the chiefs, or indunas, passing here on their way to some kraals which lie just over the hills. These kraals consist of half-a-dozen or more large huts, exactly like so many huge bee-hives, on the slope of a hill. There is a rude attempt at sod-fencing round them, and a few head of cattle graze in the neighbourhood. Lower down, the hill-side is roughly scratched by the women with crooked hoes, to form a mealy-ground. Cows and mealies are all they require, except blankets and tobacco, which latter they smoke out of a cow's horn. They seem a very gay and cheerful people, to judge by the laughter and jests I hear from the groups returning to their kraals every day, by the road just outside our fence. Sometimes one of the party carries an umbrella, and I assure you the effect of a tall stalwart Kafir, clad either in nothing at all or else a sack and carefully guarding his bare head with a tattered "Gamp," is very ridiculous. Often some one of the party walks first, playing upon a rude pipe, whilst the others jig before and after him, laughing and capering like boys let loose from school, and all chattering loudly. You never meet a man carrying a burthen, unless he is a white settler's servant. When a chief or the induna of a kraal passes this way, I see him clad in a motley garb of old regimentals, with his bare "ringed" head, riding a sorry nag, only the point of his great toe resting in his stirrup. He is followed



INDUNA AND FAMILY ON THE "TREK."—*Page* 121.

closely and with great *empressement*, by his "tail," all "ringed" men also; that is, men of some substance and weight in the community. They carry bundles of sticks, and keep up with the ambling nag, and are closely followed by some of their wives, bearing heavy loads on their heads, but stepping out bravely with beautiful erect carriage, shapely bare arms and legs, and some sort of coarse drapery worn around their bodies, covering them from shoulder to knee, in folds which would delight an artist's eye, and be the despair of a sculptor's chisel. They don't look either oppressed or discontented. Healthy, happy, and jolly, are the words by which they would be most truthfully described. Still they are lazy, and slow to appreciate any benefit from civilization, except the money; but then savages always seem to me as keen and sordid about money as the most civilized mercantile community anywhere.

February 14.

I am often asked by people who are thinking of coming here, or who want to send presents to friends here, what to bring or send. Of course it is difficult to say, because my experience is limited, and confined to one spot at present. Therefore I give my opinion very guardedly, and acknowledge it is derived in part from the experience of others who have been here a long time. Amongst other wraps I have brought a sealskin jacket and muff, which I happened

to have. These, I am assured, will be absolutely useless, and already they are a great anxiety to me, on account of the swarms of fish-tail moths which I see scuttling about in every direction if I move a hat, or look behind a picture. In fact there are destructive moths everywhere, and every drawer is redolent of camphor. The only things I can venture to recommend as necessaries, are things which no one advised me to bring, and which were only random shots. One was a light waterproof Ulster, and the other was a lot of those outside blinds for windows which come, I believe, from Japan, and are made of grass—green, painted with gay figures. I picked up these latter by the merest accident at the Baker Street Bazaar, for a few shillings. They are the comfort of my life, keeping out glare and dust in the day, and moths and insects of all kinds at night. As for my waterproof coat I never could have done without it, and little G——'s has also been most useful. It is the necessary of necessaries here, a *real* good substantial waterproof. A man cannot do better than get a regular military waterproof which will cover him from chin to heel on horseback, and even waterproof caps and hats are a comfort in this treacherous summer season, where a storm bursts over your head out of a blue dome of sky, and drenches you whilst the sun is shining brightly.

A worse climate and country for clothes of every kind and description cannot be imagined. When I first arrived, I thought I had never seen such ugly

toilettes in all my life, and I should have been less than woman (or more, which is it?) if I had not derived some secret satisfaction from the possession of at least prettier garments. What I was vain of in my secret heart was my store of cotton gowns. One can't very well wear cotton gowns in London, and as I am particularly fond of them, I indemnify myself for going abroad by rushing wildly into extensive purchases in cambrics and print dresses. They are so pretty, so cheap, and when charmingly made, as mine *were* (alas, they are already things of the past!), nothing can be so satisfactory in the way of summer country garb. Well it has been precisely in the matter of cotton gowns that I have been punished for my vanity. For a day or two each gown in turn looked charming; then came a flounce or bordering of bright red earth on the lower skirt, and a general impression of red dust and dirt all over it. That was after a drive into Maritzburg, along a road ploughed up by ox-waggons. Still I felt no uneasiness. What are cotton gowns made for, if not to be washed? Away it goes to the wash.

What is this limp discoloured rag which returns to me? Iron-moulded, blued until it is nearly black, rough-dried, starched in patches, with the tinge of red earth only more firmly fixed in than before—behold my favourite ivory cotton. My white gowns are even in a worse plight, for there are no two yards of them the same, and the grotesque mixture of extreme yellowness, extreme blueness, and a pervading tinge

of the red mud they have been washed in, renders them a piteous example of misplaced confidence. Other things fare rather better—not much; but my poor gowns are hopeless wrecks, and I am reduced to some old yachting dresses of ticking. The price of washing, as this spoiling process is pleasantly called, is enormous, and I exhaust my faculties in devising more economical arrangements. We can't wash at home, as most people do, for the simple reason that we've no water, no proper appliances of any sort, and to build and buy such would cost a small fortune. But a tall, white-aproned Kafir, with a badge upon his arm, comes now at daylight every Monday morning and takes away a huge sack full of linen, which is placed, with sundry pieces of soap and blue in its mouth, all ready for him. He brings it back in the afternoon full of clean and dry linen, for which he receives 3*s.* 6*d.* But this is only the first stage. The things to be starched have to be sorted and sent to one woman, and those to be mangled to another, and both lots have to be fetched home again. I spend my time, in this uncertain weather, watching the clouds on the days when the clothes are to come home, for it would be altogether *too* great a trial if one's starched garments were to be caught in a thunder-shower, borne aloft on Jack's head. If the washerwoman takes pains with anything it is with gentlemen's shirts; though, even then, she insists on ironing the collars into strange and fearful shapes.

Let not men think, however, that they have it all their own way in the matter of clothes. White jackets and trousers are commonly worn here in summer; and it is very soothing, I am told, to try to put them on in a hurry when the arms and legs are firmly glued together by several pounds of starch. Then, as to boots and shoes, they get so mildewed, if laid aside for even a few days, as to be absolutely offensive; and these, as well as hats, wear out at the most astonishing rate. The sun and dust and rain finish up the hats in less than no time. But I have not done with my clothes yet. A lady must keep a warm gown and jacket close at hand all through the most broiling summer weather, for a couple of hours will bring the thermometer down 10° or 20°, and I have often been gasping in a white dressing-gown at twelve o'clock, and shivering in a serge dress at three o'clock in the same day. I am making up my mind that serge and ticking are likely to be the most useful material for dresses, and, as one must have something *very* cool for these burning months, tussore or foulard, which get themselves better washed than my poor dear cottons. Silks are next to useless—too smart, too hot, too entirely out of place in such a life as this, except, perhaps, one or two dresses of tried principles which won't spot or fade or misbehave themselves in any way. Then one goes out, of a warm dry afternoon, with perhaps a tulle veil to keep off the flies, or a feather in one's hat, and returns with the one a limp wet rag, and the other quite straight. Every feather

I possess at this moment is rigidly straight and tinged with red dust besides. As for tulle or crêpe-lisse frilling, or any of these soft pretty adjuncts to a simple toilette, those are five minutes wear—no more, I solemnly declare.

I love telling a story against myself, and here is one. In spite of repeated experiences of the injurious effect of alternate damp and dust upon finery, the old Eve is occasionally too strong for my prudence, and I can't resist, on the rare occasions which offer themselves, the temptation of wearing pretty things. Especially weak am I in the matter of caps: and this is what befell me. Imagine a lovely soft summer evening, broad daylight, though it is half-past seven (it will be dark directly, however), and a dinner party to be reached a couple of miles away. The little open carriage is at the door, and into this I step, swathing my gown carefully up in a huge shawl. This precaution is especially necessary, for during the afternoon there has been a terrific thunderstorm and a sudden sharp deluge of rain. Besides a swamp or two to be ploughed through as best we may, there are these two miles of deep, red muddy road, full of ruts and big stones and pitfalls of all sorts. The drive home in the dark will be nervous work, but now in daylight let us enjoy it whilst we may. Of course I *ought* to have taken my cap in a box or bag or something of the sort, but that seemed too much trouble, especially as it was so small it needed to be firmly pinned on in its proper place. It consisted of a centre or crown of

white crêpe, a little frill of the same, and a close fitting wreath of deep red feathers all round. Very neat and pretty it looked as I took my last glance at it whilst I hastily knotted a light black lace veil over my head, by way of protection during my drive. When I got to my destination there was no looking-glass anywhere, no maid, no anything or anybody to warn me. Into the dining-room I marched, in happy unconsciousness that the extreme damp of the atmosphere had flattened the crown of my cap, and that it and its frill were mere unconsidered limp rags, whilst the unpretending circlet of feathers had started into undue prominence, and stuck straight out like a red nimbus all round my unconscious head. How my fellow guests managed to keep their countenances I cannot tell: I am certain *I* never could have sat opposite to any one with such an Ojibbeway Indian's head-dress on without giggling. But no one gave me the least hint of my misfortune, and it only burst upon me suddenly when I returned to my own room and my own glass. Still there was a ray of hope left: it *might* have been the dampness of the drive home which had worked me this woe. I rushed into F——'s dressing-room, and demanded quite fiercely whether my cap had been like that all the time? "Why yes," he admitted; adding, by way of consolation, "in fact it is a good deal subdued now: it was very wild all dinner-time. I can't say I admired it, but I supposed it was all right." Did ever any one hear such shocking apathy? In answer to my reproaches for

not telling me, he only said, "Why what could you have done with it, if you *had* known? Taken it off and put it in your pocket, or what?" I don't know, but anything would have been better than sitting at table with a thing only fit for a May-day sweep on one's head. It makes me hot and angry with myself even to think of it now.

F——'s clothes could also relate some curious experiences which they have had to go through, not only at the hands of his washerwoman, but at those of his extempore valet, Jack—I beg his pardon, Umposhongwana—the Zulu, whose zeal exceeds everything one can imagine. For instance when he sets to work to brush F——'s clothes of a morning, he is by no means contented to brush the cloth clothes only. Oh, dear, no! He brushes each sock, putting it carefully on his hand like a glove and brushing vigorously away. As they are necessarily very thin socks for this hot weather, they are apt to melt away entirely under the process. I say nothing of his blacking the boots inside as well as out, or of his laboriously scrubbing holes in a serge coat with a scrubbing brush, for these were mere errors of judgment, dictated by a kind heart. But when another Jack, who is a sort of scullion, puts a saucepan on the fire without any water and burns holes in it, or tries whether plates and dishes can support their own weight in the air without a table beneath them, then I confess my patience runs short. But both Jacks are so imperturbable, so perfectly and genuinely astonished at the untoward result of their

experiments, and so grieved that the "inkosa-casa" (I haven't a notion how the word ought to be spelt!) should be vexed, that I am obliged to leave off shaking my head, which is the only way I have of expressing my displeasure: for they keep on saying "Ja, oui, yaas" all the time, so I have to go away to laugh.

February 15.

"The champaign with its endless fleece
Of feathery grasses everywhere!
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An ever lasting wash of air."

So Browning sings, and it is exactly true at this moment, for as I lay down my book and look out over the wide veldt whose flowers have all passed with the passing summer days, I see that their place is being rapidly filled up by innumerable varieties of grasses, all shooting and waving into seed. Farmers say this grass is rank and too luxuriant, and of not much account as food for stock, but it gives an astonishing variety of beautiful colour. One patch is like miniature Pampas grass, each seed-pod being only a couple of inches long, but white and fluffy. Again, there will be tall stems laden with rich purple grains, or delicate tufts of rose-coloured seed. One of the prettiest, however, is like wee green harebells, hanging all down a tall and slender stalk, and hiding within their cups the seed. Unfortunately the weeds and burrs seed just as freely, and there is one especial

torment to the garden in the shape of an innocent-looking plant, something like an Alpine strawberry in leaf and blossom, bearing a most aggravating tuft of little black spires, which lose no opportunity of sticking to one's petticoats in myriads. They are familiarly known as "black jacks," and can hold their own as pests with any weed of my acquaintance.

I am looking forward some day to making some little excursions into the country, or going "trekking," as the local expression is. I hear on all sides how much that is interesting lies a little way beyond the reach of a ride: but it is difficult for the mistress—who is at the same time the general servant—of an establishment out here, to get away from home for even a few days, especially when there are a couple of small children to be left behind. No one travels now who can possibly help it, for the sudden violent rains which come down nearly every afternoon swell the rivers so a traveller may be detained for days within a few miles of his destination. Now in winter the roads will be hard, and dust will be the only inconvenience: at least that is what I am promised!

LETTER VIII.

AFRICAN WEATHER AND AFRICAN SCENERY.

MARITZBURG, *March* 5, 1876.

I DON'T think I like a climate which produces a thunderstorm *every* afternoon. One disadvantage of this chronic electric excitement is, that I hardly ever get out for a walk or drive. All day it is burning hot: if there is a breath of air it is sultry, and adds to the oppression of the atmosphere instead of refreshing it. Then about midday great fleecy banks of cloud begin to steal up behind the ridge of hills to the south-west; gradually they creep round the horizon, stretching their soft grey folds further and further to every point of the compass, until they have shrouded the dazzling blue sky, and dropped a cool filmy veil between the sun's fierce steady blaze and the baked earth below. That is always my nervous moment. F—— declares I am exactly like a hen with her chickens, and I acknowledge that I should like to cluck, and call everything and everybody into shelter and safety. If

little G—— is out on his pony alone,—as is generally the case, for he returns from school early in the afternoon,—I think of the great open veldt, the rough broken track, and the treacherous swamp; what wonder is it that I cannot rest indoors, but am always making bare-headed expeditions every five minutes to the brow of the hill to see if I can discern the tiny figure tearing along the open, with its floating white puggery streaming behind? The pony may safely be trusted not to loiter, for horse and cow, bird and beast, know what that rapidly-darkening shadow means, and what dangers may lurk within those patches of inky clouds, from which a deep and rolling murmur comes from time to time. I am uneasy if even a messenger has not returned; for the little river—the noisy Umsindusi—thinks nothing of spreading itself over its banks far and wide, turning the low-lying ground into a lake.

It is true that this may only last for a few hours, or even moments; but five minutes is quite enough to do a great deal of mischief when a river is rising at the rate of two feet a minute: mischief not only to human beings, but to bridges, roads, drains, as well as plantations and fields. Yet that tropical down-pour, where the clouds let loose their imprisoned moisture suddenly in solid sheets of water instead of by the more slow and civilised method of drops, is a relief to my mind, for there are worse possibilities than a wet jacket behind those lurid, low hanging vapours. There are hailstorms, like yesterday's, which rattled on the

red-tile roof as if a mitrailleuse had suddenly opened fire upon us, and with nearly as damaging an effect, for several tiles got broken and tumbled down, leaving melancholy gaps like missing teeth in the eaves; there are thunderbolts which strike the tallest trees, leaving them in an instant gaunt, and bare, and shrivelled, as though centuries had suddenly passed over their green and waving heads; there are flashes of lightning followed instantaneously by peals of thunder which seem to shake the very earth to its centre: there are all these meteorological possibilities—nay, probabilities—following fast upon a burning-hot, still morning; and what wonder is it that I am anxious and nervous until everybody belonging to me is under shelter, though shelter can only be from the driving rain or tearing gusts of wind?

As for cattle or trees being killed, that is an every-day occurrence in summer; and even a hailstorm, so long as it does not utterly bombard the town and leave the houses roofless and open to wind and weather, is not thought anything of. The hail-shower of yesterday, though, bombarded my creepers, and reduced them to a pitiful state in five minutes. So soon as it was possible to venture outside the house, I went to look at the ruin of leaf and bud strewing the cemented floor of the verandah. It is difficult to describe, and still more difficult to believe, the state to which the foliage had been reduced. On the weather side of the house every leaf was torn off, and not only torn, but riddled through and through as though by

a charge of swan-shot. All my young rose-shoots, climbing so swiftly up to the roof of the verandah, were snapped off and stripped of their tender leaves and pretty buds. The honeysuckle's luxuriant foliage was all gone, lying in a wet, forlorn mass of beaten green leaves around each pillar; and there was not a leaf left on the vines.

But a much more serious trouble came out of that storm; one which will always leave a feeling of insecurity in my mind during similar outbursts of wind and rain. The great hailstones were forced by the driving gale in immense quantities beneath the tiles, and deposited on the rude planking which, painted white, forms the ceiling. This planking has every board wide apart, so it is not difficult to foresee that so soon as the warmth of the house melted the hailstones, that is in five minutes time, the water trickled down as through a sieve. It was not to be dealt with like an ordinary leak: it was here, there, and everywhere, on sofas and chairs, beds and writing-tables; so the moment the sun shone out again, bright and hot as ever, the contents of the house had literally to be turned out of doors to dry. Drying meant, however, warping of writing-tables, and in fact of all woodwork, and fading of chintzes beneath the broiling, glaring, heat. Such are a few of the difficulties of existence in South Africa,—difficulties, however, which must be met and got over as best they may, and laughed at, once they are past and over,

as I am really doing, in spite of my affectation of grumbling.

But a very pleasant adventure came to us the other evening through one of these sudden thunder-storms. Imagine a little tea-table with straw chairs round it, standing in the verandah; a fair and pleasant view lies before us, of green rises and still greener hollows, with dark dots of plantations, from which peep red roofs or white gables. Beyond, again, lies Maritzburg, under the lee of higher hills which cast a deeper shadow over the picturesque little town. We are six in all, and four horses are being led up and down by Kafir grooms, for their riders have come out for a breath of air after a long burning day of semi-tropical heat, and also for a cup of tea and a chat. We were exactly even,—three ladies and three gentlemen,—and we grumbled at the weather and complained of our servants, according to the usual style of South African conversation. Presently someone said, "It's much cooler now." "Yes," was the answer: "but look at those clouds; and is that a river rolling down the hillside?"

Up to that moment there had not been a drop of rain, but even as the words passed the last speaker's lips, a blinding flash of light, a sullen growl, and a warning drop of rain, making a splash as big as half-a-crown at our feet, told its own story. In less time than it takes me to write or you to read, the horses had been hastily led up to the stables and stuffed into stalls only meant for two, and already occupied. But

Natalian horses are generally meek, underbred, spiritless creatures, with sense enough to munch their mealies in peace and quiet, no matter how closely they are packed. As for me, I snatched up my tea-tray and fled into the tiny drawing-room. Someone else caught up the table,—the straw chairs were left as usual to be buffeted by the wind and weather,—and we retreated to the comparative shelter of the house. But no doors or windows could keep out the driving torrents of rain which burst like a water-spout over our heads,—forcing its way under the tiles, beneath the badly-fitting doors and windows, sweeping and eddying all around like the true tropical tempest it was. Claps of thunder shook the nursery where we three ladies had taken refuge, ostensibly to encourage and cheer the nurse, but really to huddle together like sheep with the children in our midst. Flash after flash lit up the fast-gathering darkness as the storm rolled away, to end in an hour or so as suddenly as it had begun. By this time it was not much past six; and though the twilight is early in these parts, there was enough daylight still left for our friends to find their way home. So the horses were brought, and adieux were made, and our guests set forth, to return, however, in half an hour, asking whether there were any other road into town, for the river was sweeping like a maelström for half a mile on either side of the frail wooden bridge by which they had crossed a couple of hours earlier! Now the only other road into town is across a ford or "drift" as it is called here. of the

same river, a mile higher up. Of course it was of no use thinking of *this* way for even a moment; but as they were really anxious to get home if possible, F—— volunteered to go back with them and see if it was practicable to get across by the bridge. I listened and waited anxiously enough in the verandah, for I could hear the roar of the rushing river down below,—a river which is ordinarily as sluggish as a brook in midsummer,—and I was so afraid that some one might rashly venture across. But it was not to be attempted by anyone who valued their life that evening, and F—— returned joyously, bringing our guests home as captives. It was great fun, for, in true colonial fashion, we had no servants to speak of, except the nurse, the rest being Kafirs, the one more ignorant than the other. And fancy stowing four extra people into a house with four rooms, already full to overflowing! But it was done, and done successfully too, amid peals of laughter and absurd contrivances and arrangements, reminding us of the dear old New Zealand days.

The triumph of condensation was due, however, to Charlie, the Kafir groom, who ruthlessly turned my poor little pony carriage out into the open air to make room for some of his extra horses, saying, "It wash it, ma'; make it clean: carriage no get horse-sickness." And he was right, for it is certain death to turn a horse unaccustomed to the open out of his stable at night, especially at this time of year. We were all up very early the next morning, and I had an anxious moment

or two until I knew whether my market-Kafir could get out to me with bread, &c.; but soon after seven I saw him trudging gaily along, with his bare legs, red tunic, and long wand or stick, without which no Kafir stirs a yard away from home. Apropos of that red tunic, it was bought and given to him to prevent him from *wearing* the small piece of waterproof canvas I gave him to wrap up my bread, flour, &c. in on a wet morning. I used to notice that these perishable commodities arrived as often quite sopped through and spoiled *after* this arrangement about the waterproof as before: but the mystery was solved by seeing "Jim" with my basket poised on his head, the rain pelting down upon its contents, and the small square of waterproof tied with a string at each corner over his own back.

That reminds me of a hat I saw worn in Maritzburg two days ago, in surely the most eccentric fashion hat was ever yet put on. It was a large soft grey felt, fastened with a stout rope at the extreme edge of the two sides. The Kafir wearer had then turned the hat upside down and wore it thus securely moored by these ropes behind his ears and under his chin. There were sundry trifles of polished bone skewers and feathers stuck about his head as well, but the inverted hat sat serenely on the top of all, the soft crown being further secured to its owner's woolly pate by soda-water wire. I never saw anything so absurd in my life; but Charlie, who was holding my horse, gazed at it with rapture, and putting



KAFIR DANDY.—*Page* 138.

both hands together, murmured, in his best English and in the most insinuating manner, "Inkosi have old hat, ma'? like dat?" He evidently meant to imitate the fashion, if he could. Poor Charlie has lost his savings,—three pounds. He has been in great trouble about it, as he was saving up his money carefully to buy a wife. It has been stolen, I fear, by one of his fellow-servants, and suspicion points strongly to Tom, the pickle who cannot be made to respect the rights of property in any shape, from my sugar upwards. The machinery of the law has been set in motion to find these three pounds, with no good results, however; and now Charlie avows his intention of bringing a "witch-finder"—that is, a witch who finds—up to tell him where the money is. I am invited to be present at the performance, but I only hope she won't say *I* have got poor Charlie's money, for the etiquette is that whoever she accuses has to produce the missing sum at once, no matter whether they know anything about its disappearance or not.

My mind is like a balance with storms in one scale and roads in the other, and roads are uppermost now. I only wish anybody who grumbles at rates and taxes—which at all events keep him supplied with water and roads—could come here for a month. First he should see the red liquid mud which represents our available water supply out here; and next, he should walk or ride or drive—for they are all three equally perilous—down to the town, a mile or two off, with me of a dark night. I say with me, because I

should make it a point to call the grumbler's attention to the various pitfalls on the way. I think I should like him to drive, about seven o'clock, say to dinner, when one does not feel particularly inclined to struggle with a broken carriage, or to go the remainder of the way on foot. About seven P.M. the light is peculiarly treacherous and uncertain, and is worse than the darkness later on. Very well, then, we will start: first looking carefully to the harness, lest Charlie should have omitted to fasten some important strap or buckle. There is a track, in fact there are three tracks, all the way down to the main road, but each track has its own dangers. Down the centre of one runs a ridge like a backbone, with a deep furrow on either hand. If we were to attempt this, the bed of the pony-carriage would rest on this ridge, to the speedy destruction of the axles. To the right there is a grassy track, which is as uneven as a ploughed field, and has a couple of tremendous holes to begin with entirely concealed by waving grass. The secret of these constantly recurring holes is that a nocturnal animal, called an ant-bear,—*aard vaark* is the Dutch name,—makes raids upon the ant-hills, which are exactly like mole-hills, only bigger, destroys them, and scoops down to the very foundation in its search for the eggs, an especial dainty hard to get at. So one day there is a little brown hillock to be seen among the grass, and the next, only a scratched-up hole. The tiny city is destroyed; the fortress taken and razed to the ground: all the ingenious galleries and large

halls laid low, and the precious nurseries crumbled to the dust.

If we get into these we shall go no further—(a horse broke his neck in one last week)—but we will suppose them safely passed, and also the swamps. To avoid this we must take a good sweep to the left, over perfectly unknown ground, and we shall be sure to disturb a good many Kafir cranes, birds who are so ludicrously like the black-headed, red-legged, white-bodied cranes in a Noah's Ark, that they seem old friends at once. Now there is one deep, deep ravine right across the road, and then a steep hill, half way down which comes a very pretty bit of driving in doubtful light. You've got to turn abruptly to the left on the shoulder of the hill. Exactly where you turn is a crevasse of unknown depth,—originally some sort of rude drain. The rains have washed away the boarding, made havoc round the drain, and left a hole which is not pleasant to look into on foot and in broad daylight. But whatever you do, don't, in trying to avoid *this* hole, keep too much to the right, for there is what was once intended for a reasonable ditch, but furious torrents of water racing along have seized upon it as a channel and turned it into a river-course. After that, at the foot of the hill lies a quarter of a mile of mud and heavy sand, with alternate big projecting boulders and deep holes, made by unhappy waggons having stuck therein. Then you reach—always supposing you have not broken a spring—the Willow-Bridge, a frail little wooden

structure, prettily shaded and sheltered by luxuriant weeping willows drooping their trailing green plumes into the muddy Umsindusi, and so you get on to the main road into Pieter-Maritzburg. Such a bit of road as this is! It ought to be photographed. I suppose it is a couple of dozen yards wide (for land is of little value hereabouts, and we can afford wide margins to our highways), and there certainly is not more than a strip a yard wide which is anything like safe driving. In two or three places it is deeply furrowed for fifty yards or so by the heavy summer rains. Here and there are standing pools of water, in holes whose depth is unknown; and everywhere the surface is deeply seamed and scarred by waggon-wheels. Fortunately for my nerves, there are but few and rare occasions on which we are tempted to affront these perils by night, and hitherto we have been tolerably fortunate.

March 10.

You will think this letter is nothing but a jumble of grumbles, if, after complaining of the roads, I complain of my hens; but really if the case was fairly stated I am quite sure Mr. Tegetmeier, or any of the great authorities on poultry-keeping, would consider I had some ground for bemoaning myself. In the first place, as I think I have mentioned before, there is a sudden and mysterious disease among poultry which breaks out like an epidemic, and is vaguely called "fowl-sickness." That possibility alone is an anxiety

to one, and naturally makes the poultry-fancier desirous of rearing as many chickens as possible, so as to leave a margin for disaster. In spite of all my incessant care and trouble, and a vast expenditure of mealies, to say nothing of crusts and scraps, I only manage to rear about twenty-five per cent. of my chickens. Even this is accomplished in the face of such unparalleled stupidity on the part of my hens that I wonder any chickens survive at all. Nothing will induce the hens to avail themselves of any sort of shelter for their broods. They just squat down in the middle of a path or anywhere, and go to sleep there. I hear sleepy "squawks" in the middle of the night, and find next morning that a cat, or owl, or snake has been supping off half my baby chickens. Besides this sort of nocturnal fatalism they perpetrate wholesale infanticide during the day, by dragging the poor little wretches about among weeds and grass five feet high, all wet and full of thorns and burrs.

But it is perhaps in the hen-house that the worst and most idiotic part of their nature shows itself. Some weeks ago I took three hens who were worrying us all to death by clucking entreaties to be given eggs to sit upon, and I established them in three adjoining empty boxes with some seven or eight eggs under each. What do you think these hens have done? They contrived, in the first place, to push and roll all the eggs into one nest! Then they appear to have invited every laying hen on the place, into that box, for I counted forty-eight eggs in it last week! Upon

these *one* hen sits in the very centre! Of course there are many eggs outside her wings, though she habitually keeps every feather fluffed out to the utmost, which must in itself be a fatigue. Around her, slanting, but still sitting vigorously, were three other hens covering, or attempting to cover, this enormous nest full of eggs. Every now and then they appear to give a party, for I find several eggs kicked out into the middle of the hen-house, and strange fowls feeding on them, amid immense cackling. Nothing ever seems to result from this pyramid of feathers. It —the pyramid—has been there five weeks now, and at distant intervals just a couple of chickens have appeared, which none of the hens will acknowledge! Sitting appears to be their one idea: they look upon chickens as an interruption to their more serious duties, and utterly disregard them. It is quite heart-breaking to see these unhappy chickens seeking for a mother, and meeting with nothing but pecks and squalls, which plainly express, "Go along, *do!*" One hen I have left, as advised, to her own devices, and she has shown her instinct by laying ten eggs on a rafter over the stable, upon which she can barely balance herself and them. Upon these eggs she is now sitting with great diligence, but as each chicken is hatched there is no possible fate for it but to tumble off the rafter and be killed: there is no possible means of ascent or descent except a drop of a dozen feet. Another hen has turned a pigeon off her nest, and insisted on sitting upon the two eggs herself. Great

was her disgust, however, when she found that her babies required to be fed every five minutes, and that no amount of pecking would induce them to come out for a walk the day they were hatched: she deserted them, of course, and the poor little pigeons died of neglect. Now do you not think Kafir hens are a handful for a poor woman (who has quantities of other things to do) to manage?

Part of my regular occupation at this time of year when nearly every blade of grass carries a tick at its extreme tip, is to extract these pertinacious little beasties from the children's legs and arms. I can understand how it is that G—— is constantly coming to me, saying, "A needle, mumsy, *if* you please: here is such a big tick!" because he is always in the grass helping Charlie to stuff what he has cut for the horses into a sack, or assisting some one else to burn a large patch of rank vegetation, and dislodging snakes, centipedes, and all sorts of venomous things in the process. I can understand, I say, how this mischievous little imp, who is always in the front of whatever is going on, should gather unto himself ticks and musquitoes and even "fillies," but I cannot comprehend why the baby who, only from lack of physical possibilities, leads a comparatively harmless and innocent existence, should also attract ticks to his fat arms and legs. I thought perhaps they might come from a certain puppy which gets a good deal of hugging up, but I am assured that a tick never leaves an animal, they will come off the

grass upon any live thing passing, but they never move once they have taken hold of flesh with their cruel pincers.

It is quite a dreadful thing to see some of the out-spanned oxen when they come down to the "sluit" to drink. Their dewlaps and indeed their whole bodies are often a mass of these horrible, swollen, bloated insects, as big as a large pea already, but sucking away with all their might, and resisting all efforts the unhappy animals can make, with their head or tail, to get rid of them. Whenever I see the baby restless and fidgetty I undress him, and I am pretty sure to find a tick or two lazily moving about looking for a comfortable place to settle. Both the children keep tolerably well here, although they do not look so rosy as they used to in England, but I am assured that the apple-cheeks will come back in the winter. They have good appetites, and certainly enjoy the free unconventional life amazingly, only baby will *not* take to a Kafir nurse-boy. He condescends to smile when Charlie or any of the servants (for they all pet him a great deal) execute a war-dance for his amusement, or sing him a song, but he does not like being carried about in their arms. I have now got a Kafir nurse girl, a Christian. She is a fat, good-tempered, and very docile girl of fifteen, who looks at least twenty-five years old. Baby only goes to her in order to pluck off the gay kerchief she wears on her head. When that is removed he sets to work at her necklace and copper ear-rings.

It is so absurd to see an English child falling into colonial ways. G—— talks to all the animals in Kafir, for they evidently don't understand English. If one wants to get rid of a dog, it is of no use saying "Get out" ever so crossly; but when G—— yells "furht-sack" (this is pure phonetic spelling out of my own head), the cur retreats precipitately. So to a horse: you must tell him to go on in Kafir, or he won't stir; and they will not stop for any sound except a long, low whistle. G—— even plays at games of the country. Sometimes I come upon the shady side of the verandah taken up with chairs, arranged in pairs all its length, and a sort of tent of rugs and shawls at one end, which is the waggon. "I am playing at trekking, mumsy, dear. Would you like to wait and see me outspan? Here is a nice place, with water for my bullocks and wood for my fire. Look at the break of my waggon; and here's such a jolly, real bullock-whip Charlie made me out of a bamboo and strips of bullock-hide." G—— can't believe that he ever played at railways, or horses, or civilised games; and it is very certain the baby will "trek" and "outspan" so soon as he can toddle.

We grown-up people catch violent colds here; and it is no wonder, considering the changes of weather—far beyond what even you, with your fickle climate, have to bear. Twenty-four hours ago it was so cold that I was glad of my sealskin jacket at six o'clock in the evening, and it was bitterly cold at night.

The next morning there was a hot wind, and it has been like living at the mouth of a furnace ever since. I heard the climate defined the other day as one in which sick people got well, and well people got sick; and I begin to think it is rather a true way of looking at it. People are always complaining, and the doctors (of whom there are a great many in proportion to the population) seem always very busy. Everybody says, "Wait till the winter;" but I have been here four months now, three of which have been very trying and disagreeable. This seems a hard thing to say of a climate with so good a reputation as this, but I am obliged to write of things as I find them. I used to hear the climate immensely praised in England, but I don't hear much said in its favour here: the most encouraging remark one meets with is, "Oh, you'll get used to it!"

HOWICK, *March* 13.

It is difficult to imagine that so cool and charming a spot as this is only a dozen miles from Maritzburg, of which one gets so tired. It must be acknowledged that each mile might fairly count for six English ones, if the difficulty of getting over it were reckoned. The journey occupied three hours of a beautiful afternoon, with the first crisp freshness of autumn in its balmy breath; and the road climbed a succession of hills, with, from the top of each, a wide and charming prospect. We travelled in a sort of double dog-cart, of a solidity and strength of construction

which filled me with amazement until I saw the nature of the ground it had to go over; and then I was fain to confess it might have been—if such were possible—twice as strong with advantage; for we bent our axles in spite of careful driving and a slow pace. This road is the first stage of the great overland journey to the Diamond Fields; and it is difficult to imagine how there can be any transport service at all, in the face of such difficulties.

It was—as is often the case where an almost tropical sun draws up the moisture from the earth—a misty evening, and the distant view was too vague and vaporous to leave any distinct picture on my memory. Round Howick itself are several little plantations in the clefts of the nearest downs, and each plantation shelters a little farm or homestead. We can only just discern in more distant hollows deep blue-black shadows, made by patches of native forest, the first I have seen; but close at hand the park-like country is absolutely bare of timber, save for these sheltering groups of gum-trees beneath whose protection other trees can take root and flourish. Gum-trees seem the nurses of all vegetation in a colony: they drain a marshy soil and make it fit for a human dwelling-place. Wherever they grow, there you see also willows with their tender delicate leaves, and sentinel poplars whose lightly poised foliage keeps up a cool rustle always. But now the road is getting a trifle better, and we are beginning to drop down hill. Hitherto it has all been

stiff collar work, and we have climbed a thousand feet and more above Maritzburg. It is closing in quite a cold evening, welcome to our sun-baked energies as we drive across quite an imposing bridge (as well it may be, for it cost a good many thousand pounds) which spans the Umgeni river, and so round a sharp turn and up a steepish hill among sheltering trees, to where the hotel stands, amid a beautiful undergrowth of arum lilies and ferns. Howick appears to be all hotel, for two have already been built and a third is in progress. A small store and a pretty wee church are all the other component parts of the place. Our hotel is delightful, with an enchanting view of the Umgeni widening out as it approaches the broad cliff, down which it leaps a few hundred yards further on.

Now ever since I arrived in Natal I have been pining to see a real mountain and a real river, not a big hill, or a capricious spruit, sometimes a ditch and sometimes a lake, but a respectable river, too deep to be muddy. Here it is before me at last, the splendid Umgeni, curving out from among the hills, wide and tranquil, yet with a rushing sound suggestive of its immense volume. We can't waste a moment indoors: not even the really nice fresh butter,—and what a treat that is you must taste Maritzburg butter to understand,—nor the warm tea can detain us for long. We snatch up our shawls and run out in the gloaming to follow the river's sound and find out the spot where it leaps down. It is not

difficult, once we are in the open air, to decide in which direction we must go, and we brave ticks and even snakes, and go straight across country through the long grass. There is the Fall! quite suddenly we have come upon it. So beautiful in its simplicity and grandeur; no ripple or break to confuse the eye and take away the sense of unity and consolidation. The river widens and hurries, gathering up strength and volume until it reaches that great cliff of iron-stone. You could drop a plumb-line over it, so absolutely straight is it, for 320 feet. I have seen other waterfalls in other parts of the world, but I never saw anything much more imposing than this narrow perpendicular sheet of water, broken into a cloud of spray and foam so soon as it touches the deep silent basin below. The water is discoloured where it flings itself over the cliff, and there are tinges and stains of murky yellow on it there; but the spray which flies up from below is purer and whiter than driven snow, and keeps a great bank of lycopodium moss, at the foot of the cliff over which it is driven by every breath of air, fresh and young and vividly green. Arum lilies, dwarfed to the size of wood-anemones, spangled this sylvan plateau. Many rare ferns and fantastic bushes droop on either side of the great Fall,—droop as if they, too, were giddy with the noise of the water rushing past them, and were going to fling themselves into the dark pool below. But kindly nature holds them back, for she needs the contrast of branch and stem to give effect to the

purity of the falling water. Just one last gleam of reflected sunlight gilded the water's edge where it dashed over the cliff, and a pale crescent moon hung low over it in a soft "daffodil sky." It was all ineffably beautiful and poetic, and the roar of the falling river seemed only to bear out with greater intensity the absolute silence of the desolate spot and the twilight hour.

March 15.

If the Fall was beautiful in the mysterious gloaming, it looks a thousand times more fair in its morning splendour of sunshine. The air here is so pleasant; almost cold, and yet deliciously balmy. It is certainly an enchanting change from Pieter-Maritzburg, were it not for the road which lies between—at least it is not a road at all. What is the antithesis of a road, I wonder—the opposite of a road? That is what the intervening space should be called. After the river takes its leap it moves quietly away among the hills and valleys, a wide sheet of placid water, as though there was nothing more needed in the way of exertion. I hear there are some other falls quite as characteristic in their way, a few miles further in the interior, but as the difficulty of getting to them is very great, they must wait until we can spare a longer time here. To-day we drove across frightful places until we got on a hill just opposite the Fall. I am not generally nervous, but I confess to a very bad five minutes as we approached the edge of the cliff. The break of

the dog-cart was hard down, but the horses had their ears pricked well forward, and were leaning back almost on their haunches as we moved slowly down the grassy incline. Every step seemed as if it would take us right over the edge, and the roar and rush of the falling water opposite appeared to attract and draw us towards itself in a frightful and mysterious manner. I was never more thankful in my life than when the horses stood stock-still, planted their fore feet firmly forward, trembling all over, and refused to move an inch nearer. We were not really so very close to the edge, but the incline was steep and the long grass concealed that there was any ground beyond.

After all, I liked better returning to a cliff a good deal nearer to the falls, where a rude seat of stones had been arranged on a projecting part from which there was an excellent view. I asked as one always does, whether there had ever been any accidents, and among other narrations of peril and disaster I heard this one.

Some years ago—nothing would induce the person who told me the story to commit himself to any fixed period, or any nearer date than this—a waggon drawn by a long team of oxen was attempting to cross the drift or ford which used to exist a very short way above the falls. I saw the spot afterwards, and it really looked little short of madness to have attempted to establish a ford so near the place where the river falls over this great cliff. They tried to

build a bridge at the same spot, but it had been swept away over and over again, and some of the buttresses remain standing to this day: one of them rests on a small islet between the river and the cliff, only a few yards from the brink of the precipice. It is a sort of rudimentary island, formed by great blocks of stone and some wind-blown earth, in which a few tufts of rank grass have taken root, binding it all together. But this island does not divide the volume of the water as it tumbles headlong over the cliff, for the river is only parted by it for a brief moment. It sweeps rapidly round on either side of the frail obstacle, and unites itself again into a broad sheet just before its leap. The old Boers used to imagine that this island broke the force of the current, and would protect them from being carried over the falls by it. In winter, when water is low and scarce, this may be so; but in summer it is madness to trust to it. Anyway the Dutchman got his team half way across, a Kafir sitting in the waggon and driving, another lad acting as "fore-looper" and guiding the "span," as a team is called here. The Boer prudently rode, and had no sooner reached the midstream than he perceived the current to be of unusual depth and swiftness. He managed, however, to struggle across to the opposite bank, and from thence he beheld his waggon overturn, his goods wash out of it and sweep like straws over the precipice; as for the poor little fore-looper, nobody knows what became of him. The overturned waggon, with the struggling oxen still

yoked to it, and the Kafir driver clinging on, swept to the very edge of the falls. There a lucky promontory of this miniature island caught and held it fast, drowning some of the poor bullocks indeed, but catching the waggon. Doubtless the Kafir might easily have saved himself, for he had hold of the waggon when it was checked in its rapid rush; but instead of grasping at a tuft of grass or a rock, at a wheel or the horn of a bullock, he stood straight up, holding his whip erect in his right hand, and with one loud, defiant whoop of exultation, jumped straight over the fearful edge. His master said the fright must have driven him mad, for *he* rode furiously along the bank shouting words of help and encouragement, which probably the poor Kafir never heard; for he believed his last hour had come, and sprang to meet the death before him with that dauntless bravery which savages so often show in the face of the inevitable. As one sat in safety and looked at the rushing irresistible water, one could easily picture to one's self the struggling pile of waggon and oxen in the water, just caught back at the edge, the frantic horseman by the river-side gesticulating wildly, and the ebony figure erect and fearless, with the long streaming whip held out, taking that desperate leap as though of his own free will.

I think we spent the greater part of the day at the fall, looking at it under every effect of passing cloud, shadow, or sunny sky; beneath the mid-day brilliancy of an almost tropical sun, and in the soft pearly grey

tints of the short twilight. The young moon set almost as soon as she rose, and gave no light to speak of; it was therefore no use stumbling in the dark to the edge of so dangerous a cliff, where we could see nothing but the ghostly shimmer of spray down below, and only hear the ceaseless roar of the water. So how do you think we amused ourselves after our late dinner? We went to a travelling circus, advertised to play at Howick "for one night only:"—that is to say, it was not there at all, because the waggons had all stuck fast in some of the numerous holes in that fearful road. But the performing dogs and ponies had not stuck, nor the "boneless boy"—*he* could not stick anywhere, as G—— remarked; and they held a little performance of their own in a room at the other hotel. Thither we stumbled through pitchy darkness at nine of the night, G—— insisting on being taken out of bed, and dressed again, to come with us. There was a good deal of difference between the behaviour and demeanour of the black and white spectators at that small performance. The Kafirs sat silent, dignified, and attentive, gazing with wide open eyes at the "boneless boy," who turned himself upside down, and inside out, in the most perplexing fashion. "What do you think of it?" I asked a Kafir who spoke English. "Him master take all him bone out 'fore him begin, Inkosa-casa; when him finish put 'em back again inside him;" and indeed that was what our pliable friend looked like. We two ladies—for I had the rare treat of a charming

companion of my own "sect" on this occasion—could not remain long, however, and were obliged to leave the "boneless one" in the precise attitude of one of those porcelain grotesque monsters one sees; his feet held tightly in his hands, on either side of his grinning Japanese face, and his body disposed comfortably in an arch over his head. Even G—— had to give up and come away, for he was stifled by bad cigar smoke and frightened by the noise.

At daylight next morning we were up betimes, and made an early start so as to avoid the heat of the morning sun. A dense mist lay close to the earth as far as the eye could reach; and out of its soft, white billows only the highest of the hill-tops peeped, like islands in a lake of fleecy clouds. We bumped along in our usual style, here a hole, there a boulder; slipping now on a steep cutting, for this damp mist makes the hill-sides very "greasy," as our driver remarked, climbing painfully over ridge after ridge, until we reached the highest point of the road between us and Maritzburg. Here we paused for a few moments to breathe our panting team, and to enjoy the magnificent view. I have seen a river at last worthy of the name; and now I see mountains in place of the incessant rising hills which have hitherto opened out before me in each fresh ascent. A splendid range of lofty—not peaks, for they are nearly all cut straight against the sky,—but level lines far up beyond the clouds which are just flushing red with the sunrise. The mountains are among and behind the clouds, and have not yet caught

any of the light and colour of the new day. They loom dimly through the growing cloud-splendours, cold and ashen and sombre, as befits their majestic outline. These are the Drakensberg, snow-covered except in hottest weather. I miss the serrated peaks of the Southern Alps, and the grand confusion of the Himalayan range. These mountains are lofty indeed, and rise far into cloudland; but except for a mighty crag, or a huge notch here and there, they represent a series of straight lines against the sky. This is evidently the peculiarity of the mountain formation of South Africa: I noticed it first in Table Mountain at Cape Town: it is repeated in every little hill between Durban and Maritzburg; and now it is before me, carried out in a gigantic scale in this splendid range. My eye is not used to it I suppose; for I like mountains to have peaks for summits and not straight lines, no matter how lofty those straight lines may be.

It was a beautiful scene, for from the Drakensberg down to where we stood rolled a very ocean of billowy, green hills softly folded over each other, with delicious purple shadows in their hollows, and shining pale green lights on their sunny slopes. We had left the Umgeni so far behind that it only showed like a broad silver ribbon here and there, while the many red roads stretching away into the background certainly derived enchantment from distance. The foreground was made lively by an encampment of waggons, which were just going to "in-span" and start. The women

fussed about the gipsy-like fires, getting breakfast; the Kafirs shouted to the bullocks, grazing, like the prudent beasts they are, until the last moment; and last, not least, to G——'s intense delight, four perfectly tame ostriches came walking leisurely out from among the waggons, eating food out of the children's hands and looking about for "digesters" among the grass. I felt inclined to point out the boulders with which the road was strewn to their favourable notice. They had come from the distant borders of the Transvaal, a weary journey off, and were the family pets, on their way to be sold and sent to England. The travellers—"trekkers" is the correct word—expected to get at least £35 each for these splendid male birds in full plumage, and they were probably worth much more.

LETTER IX.

ZULU WITCHES AND WITCH-FINDERS.

MARITZBURG, *April* 4, 1876.

CAN you believe that we are crying out for rain already, and anxiously scanning the clouds as they bank up over the high hills to the south-west? But so it is. It would be a dreadful misfortune if the real dry weather were to set in so early, without the usual heavy downfall of rain which fills the tanks and springs, and wards off the evil day of a short water supply and no grass. Besides which, everybody faithfully promises me pleasanter weather,—weather more like one's preconceived idea of the climate of Natal, after a regular three days' rain. It is high time for my temper, as well as for the tanks, that this rain should come, for the slow, dragging summer days are now only diversified by constant gales of hot winds. These same hot winds are worse than anything, more exasperating and more exhausting; nor does a drop of dew fall at night to refresh the fast-browning

vegetation, over which they scatter a thick haze of dust. Hot winds are bad enough in India, lived through in large, airy, lofty rooms, with mats of fragrant grass, kept constantly wet and hung at every door and window; with punkahs, and ice, and all the necessary luxury and idle calm of Indian life. What must they be here,—and, remember, the wind is just as hot, only it blows at short intervals, instead of continuously, for months,—in small houses, with low rooms of eight or ten feet square, and in a country where the mistress of the house is head cook, head housemaid, head nurse, and even head coachman and gardener, and where a glass of cool water is a luxury only dreamed of in one's feverish slumbers? Nature demands that we should all be lotus-eaters, and lie "propt on beds of amaranth and moly," at all events from November to April. Necessity insists on our rising early, and going to bed late, and eating the bread of carefulness, during all these hot weeks: that is to say, one must work very hard one's self if one desires to have a tolerably clean and comfortable house, and to live in any sort of rational and civilised fashion. For my part, I like hard work, speaking generally, but not in a hot wind. Yet people seem to be pretty well, except their tempers,—again speaking for myself,—so I suppose the climate is rather disagreeable than actually unhealthy.

We have lately added to our establishment a Kafir girl, who is a real comfort and help. Malīa (for Kafirs cannot pronounce the letter *r*: "red" is always

"led" with them, and so on) is a short, fat, good-humoured-looking damsel of fifteen years of age, but looks thirty. Regarded as a servant, there is still much to be desired, in spite of the careful and excellent training she has enjoyed in the household of the Bishop of Natal; but as a playmate for G——, who is fast teaching her the game of cricket, or as a nursemaid for the baby, she is indeed a treasure of sweet temper and willingness. To be sure she did race the perambulator down a steep hill the other day, upsetting the baby and breaking the small vehicle into bits; but, still, English nursemaids do the same, and do not tell the truth about it at once, as Maria did: it was done to amuse the two children, and answered that part of the programme excellently well, even the final upset eliciting peals of laughter from both the mischievous monkeys.

It is also rather singular that, in spite of the extreme slowness and deliberation of my Kafir housemaid's movements, she breaks quite as much crockery in a week as any one else would in a year; and she is so inexpressibly quaint about it all, that one has neither the heart nor the command of countenance requisite to scold. I handed her a saucer last night, to put down: the next moment she remarked, in her singularly sweet and gentle voice and pretty musical accent, "Now, here is the saucer in three pieces." So it was; and how she broke it, without dropping it, must ever be a mystery to me. It was like a conjuring trick, but it occurs somewhat

too often. Malia ought not to be a housemaid at all. She has a thirst for knowledge which is very remarkable, and a good deal of musical talent. She speaks and reads three languages—Kafir, English, and Dutch—with perfect fluency and facility; and is trying hard to learn to write, practising incessantly on a slate. She is always whistling, or singing, or picking out tunes on a sort of pipe, on which she plays some airs very prettily. Every spare moment of her time she is poring over a book; and I wish, with all my heart, that I had time to teach her to write, and to learn Kafir from her myself; but, except on Sundays, when I read with her and hear her say some hymns, I never have a moment. She is so anxious to learn, poor girl, that she watches her opportunity; and, when I sit down to brush my hair or lace my boots, she drops on one knee by my side, produces her book from her pocket, and says, in the most *câlinante* voice, "Sall I lead to you a little, Inkosa' casa?" Who could have the heart to say No, although my gravity is sorely tried by some peculiarities of pronunciation. She cannot say "such," it is too harsh; and the nearest we can arrive at, after many efforts, is "sush." Almost every word has a vowel tacked on to the end, so as to bring it as close to her own liquid, soft-sounding Zulu as possible. I think what upsets me most is to hear our first parents called "'Dam' and Eva." But, indeed, most of the Bible names are difficult of recognition; yet her idioms are perfect, and she speaks in well-chosen,

rather elegant phraseology. Every alternate Sunday, Malīa goes down to church dressed in the smartest of bright pink cotton frocks, made very full and very short, a clean white apron, and a sky-blue kerchief, arranged on her head in a becoming turban. Malīa's shy grins of delight and pride, as she comes thus arrayed to make me her parting curtsey, are quite charming to behold, and display a set of teeth which it would be hard to match for beauty anywhere out of Kafir-land.

The more I see of the Kafirs, the more I like them. People tell us they are unreliable; but I find them gay and good-humoured, docile and civil. Every cow-herd on the veldt has his "sako bono," or good morning, as he passes me fern or grass-seed hunting in the early morning, and I hear incessant peals of laughter from kitchen and stable. Of course laughter probably means idleness, but I have not the heart to go out *every* time (as indeed I ought, I believe) and make them, what Mr. Toots calls, "resume their studies." Their mirth is very different from that of my old friends, the West-Indian negroes, who were always chattering and laughing. The true Kafir wears a stolid expression of countenance in public, and is not easily moved to signs of surprise or amusement; but at home they seem to me a very merry and sociable people. Work is always difficult and disagreeable to them, and many generations must pass before a Kafir will do a hand's turn more than is actually necessary to keep his body and soul together.

They are very easily trained as domestic servants, in spite of the drawback of not understanding half what is said to them; and they make especially good grooms. The most discouraging part of the process, however, is that it is well-nigh perpetual, for, except gipsies, I don't believe there is on the face of the earth a more restless, unsettled human being among his white brethren than your true Kafir. Change he seems to crave for, and change he will have, acknowledging half his time that he knows it must be for the worse. They will leave a comfortable, easy place, where they are well treated and perfectly happy, for harder work and often blows, just for the sake of a change. No kindness can attach them, except in the rarest instances, and nothing upon earth could induce them to forego their periodical visits to their own kraals. This means a return, for the time being, to barbarism; which seems very strange when a man has had time to get accustomed to clothes, a good room, good food, and the hundred and one tastes which civilisation teaches. Imagine laying aside the comforts and decencies of life to creep in at the low door of a big bee-hive, and squat naked round a huge fire, smoking tobacco and drinking a kind of beer which is made from mealies. I've often seen this beer, and Charlie is very anxious I should taste it, bringing me some occasionally in an old biscuit-tin, with assurances that "ma'" will find it very good. But I cannot get beyond looking at it, for it is difficult to associate the idea of beer with a thick liquid

resembling dirty chocolate more than anything else. So I always stave off the evil day of tasting with ingenious excuses.

Perhaps they are more behindhand in medical faith than in any other respect. The other day one of our Kafirs had a bad bilious attack, and, declining all offers of more civilised treatment, got one of his own physicians to bleed him in the great toe, with, as he declared, the happiest effect. Certain it is that in the afternoon he reported himself as perfectly well. But quite the most extraordinary kind of remedy came before me lately. Tom had a frightful headache,—which is not to be wondered at, considering how that boy smokes the strongest tobacco out of a cow's horn, morning, noon, and night; to say nothing of incessant snuff-taking. The first I heard of Tom's headache was when Charlie came to ask me for a remedy; which I thought very nice on his part, because he and Tom live in a chronic state of quarrelling, and half my time is taken up in keeping the peace between them. However, I told Charlie that I knew of no remedy for a bad headache except going to bed, and that was what I should advise Tom to do. Charlie smiled rather contemptuously, as if pitying my ignorance, and asked if I would give him a box of wooden matches. Now matches are a standing grievance in a Kafir establishment, for they go at the rate of a box a day if not carefully locked up. So I, failing to connect wooden matches and Tom's headache together, began a reproachful catalogue of how many boxes of

matches he had asked for lately. Charlie however hastily cut me short by saying, "But ma', it for make Tom well." Of course I produced a new box of "Bryant and May," and stood by to watch Charlie doctoring Tom. Match after match did Charlie strike, holding the flaming splinter up Tom's exceedingly wide nostrils, until the box was empty. Tom winced a good deal, but bore this singeing process with great fortitude. Every now and then he cried out—as well he might—when Charlie thrust a freshly-lighted match up his nose; but on the whole he stood it bravely, and by the time the matches were all burned out, he declared his headache was quite cured, and that he was ready to go and chop wood. Nor would he listen to the idea of going to bed. "It very good stuff to smell, ma'," said Charlie: "burn de sickness away."

They are inexpressibly queer, too, about their domestic arrangements, and I had a long argument with a Kafir woman the other day, through Malīa's interpretation, as to the propriety of killing one of her babies when she chanced to have twins. My dusky friend declared it was much the best plan, and one which was always followed when the whites did not interfere. If both children were kept alive, she averred, they would be puny, wretched little creatures, and would be quite sure to die eventually; so, as a Kafir looks to his children to take care of and work for him even in his middle age,—the sons by their wages and the daughters by their dowries, or

rather by the prices paid for them,—she declared it was very bad economy to try to rear two babies at once, and calmly recapitulated the instances in her own and her neighbours' families where one wretched twin had been killed to give the other a better chance. She confessed she had been much puzzled upon one occasion when the twins were a girl and a boy, for both would have been useful hereafter. "I thought of the cows I should get for the girl," she said, "and then I thought of the boy's wages, and I didn't know which to keep; but the girl, she cried the most, so I kill her, and the boy grow up a very good boy, earns plenty money." That was Malīa's interpretation; for although she speaks excellent English, when another person's words have to be reproduced her tenses get a little confused and jumbled up. But she is a capital mouthpiece, and it alway amuses me to bargain, through her, for my eggs and chickens and mealies. Sorry bargaining it is, generally resulting in my paying double the market price for these commodities.

Lately I have been even more fleeced than usual, especially by my egg-man, who is an astute old Kafir, very much adorned with circlets of copper wire on his legs and arms. He brings his eggs in a bag, which he swings about so recklessly that it is a perpetual marvel to me how they escape annihilation. Every time he comes he adds threepence to the price of his eggs per dozen on account of the doubled hut-tax, and I assure him that in time it will end in my having

paid the whole amount instead of him. Hitherto the natives have paid a tax of seven shillings per annum on each hut, but this year it has been doubled, so the Kafirs very sensibly make their white customers pay a heavy percentage on the necessaries of life with which they supply them. It is exactly what it used to be in London three or four years ago, when coals were so costly: everything rose in price, from china vases down to hairpins; so now this doubled tax is the excuse for a sudden rise in the value of eggs, fowls, cows, mealies, and what not. I don't understand political economy myself, but it always seems to me a curious fact that although every article of food or clothing is only too ready to jump up in price on the smallest excuse, it *never comes down again.* I try to chaff my old Kafir egg merchant, and show him by figures that his extra charge for eggs pays his extra seven shillings in about six weeks. I endeavour to persuade him, after this increased tax is thus provided for, to go back to his original price; but he smiles knowingly, and shakes his head murmuring "Ka, ka," or in English, "No."

All this time however I am longing to tell you of a famous tea-party I have had here lately. A regular "drum," only it beat all your London teas hollow, even with dear little "Minos"[1] thrown into the bargain, because in the corner of *my* cards were the words, "Tea and Witches."—Now I ask you could any one

[1] A wonderful performing dog exhibited by Madame Häger, and much in request during one season.

wish for a greater excitement than that to enliven a summer afternoon? Attractive as was the bait, it yet was a blunder or a fib, which you choose, for so far from being witches, my five extraordinary performers were the sworn enemies of witches, being in fact "witch-finders," or "witch-doctors," as they are just as often called. I am quite sure that no one has ever suffered so much anxiety about a small entertainment as I did about that tea party! Of course there was the usual thunderstorm due that afternoon, and not until the last moment, when the clouds rolled off towards the Umgeni valley, leaving us a glorious sky and pleasant breeze, did I cease to fear that the whole thing might prove a *fiasco*. By the time I had begun to have confidence in the weather, came a distracted message from the obliging neighbour who supplies me with milk, to say that, as ill-luck would have it, her cows had selected this particular afternoon of all the year to stray away and get themselves impounded, and that consequently the delivery of sundry bottles (everything is sold in bottles here) of milk, was as uncertain as—what shall I say? Natal weather—for nothing can be more uncertain than *that*. Imagine my dismay. No one dared even to suggest preserved milk to me, so well known is my antipathy to that miserable make-shift. I should have sat me down and wept if at that moment I had not discerned a small herd of cattle wending their way across the veldt to my neighbour's gate.

Oh joy! the milk and the weather are all right, but

what in the name of wonder is this immense mob of shouting, singing Kafirs clamouring outside my garden fence? These are my witch-finders, escorted by nearly the whole black population of Maritzburg. They have arrived about three hours before the proper time and are asking for some place to dress in, not from any fastidiousness, but simply because they don't want profane eyes to witness the details of assuming their professional decorations. Remember there is not a white man nearer than Maritzburg, and there is nothing upon earth to prevent any number of these excited, shouting men and boys from walking into my little house, or at least helping themselves to anything off the tea-tables which the servants are beginning to arrange in the verandah. But they were as docile and obedient as possible, readily acceding to my desire that they should remain outside the fence, and asking for nothing except copious draughts of water. Certainly I was armed with a talisman, for I went out to them with one of my numerous "Jacks" as an interpreter, and told them they must all sit down and wait patiently until Mr. S—— (their own beloved Inkosi) came, adding that he would be here immediately. That was a fib, for he could not come until late; but an excellent substitute very soon appeared and set my mind partly at rest. I say only "partly," because I had been so teased about my party. F—— had been especially aggravating, observing from time to time that my proceedings were at once illegal and improper, and adding that he was "surprised at me."

Can you imagine anything more trying? And I yet knew quite well all the time that he was just as anxious to see these people as we were, only he persisted in being semi-official and disagreeable. Never mind, I triumphed over him afterwards when it all went off so well.

At last five o'clock came, bringing with it a regiment of riders thirsting for tea and clamorous to see the witches, wanting their fortunes told, their lost trinkets found, and heaven knows what beside. "They are not witches at all," I say, gravely; "they are witch-finders; and I believe the whole thing is very wrong." Here was a depressing announcement for one's hostess to make! but it had a good effect for the moment, and sent my guests quietly off to console themselves with their tea; *that* at least could not be wrong, especially as the milk had arrived, new and delicious. In the meantime kind Mr. Y—— had gone off to fetch the witches—as everybody persisted in calling them—and presently they appeared in full official dress, walking along in a measured stately step, keeping time and tune to the chanting of a body-guard of girls and women, who sung continuously, in a sort of undertone, a monotonous kind of march.

They made an excellent stage entrance. Grave, composed, erect of carriage, and dauntless of mien, these Amazonian women walked past the verandah, raising their hand as the men do with the low cry of "Inkōsi" in salutation. Their pride is to be looked upon *as* men when once they take up this dread

profession, which is sometimes shared with them by men. They are permitted to bear shield and spear as warriors, and they hunt and kill with their own hands the wild beasts and reptiles whose skins they wear. Their day is over and ended however, for the cruelties practised under their auspices had risen to a great height, and it is now against the law to seek out a witch by means of these pitiless women. It is not difficult to understand—bearing in mind the superstition and cruelty which existed in remote parts of England not so very long ago—how powerful such women became among a savage people, or how tempting an opportunity they could furnish of getting rid of an enemy. Of course they are exceptional individuals ; more observant, more shrewd, and more dauntless, than the average fat, hard-working Kafir women ; besides possessing the contradictory mixture of great physical powers and strong hysterical tendencies. They work themselves up to a pitch of frenzy, and get to believe as firmly in their own supernatural discernment as any individual among the trembling circle of Zulus to whom a touch from the whisk they carry in their hands is a sentence of instant death.

It gave a certain grim interest to what a Scotch friend called the "ploy" to know that it had once been true ; and I begged Mr. Y—— to explain to them, before they began, that the only reason I had wanted to see them arose from pure curiosity to know what they looked like, how they were dressed, and so forth ; and that I quite understood that it was all

nonsense and very wrong, and against the law to do so *really*, but that this was only a play and a pretence. I must confess that I felt rather ashamed at making this public avowal, but my conscience demanded it clamorously, and I felt many misgivings lest I should indeed be causing any "weak brother to offend." However it was too late now for scruples, and a sort of shout came up from the good-humoured, well-behaved crowd outside, assuring me they knew it was only for fun, and that it was quite right; and they were glad for the English "Inkosa' casa" and her friends to see an old custom which it was a good thing to have done with. This little speech, so full of true tact, put me at my ease at once, and we all took up our position at one side of the little semi-circular lawn, where the dance-crescent was already formed, supplying, ourselves, the place of the supposed ring of spectators and victims.

I wish I could make you see the scene as I saw it, and shall ever see it when I look back upon it. The first original "tail" of my witch-finders had been supplemented by a dense mob of people, who formed a background, behaving perfectly quietly, and though uninvited and unexpected giving not the slightest trouble. That is the odd part of a colony: individuals are rougher, less polite, more brusque and overbearing than the people one is accustomed to see in England; but the moment it comes to a great concourse of people, then the absolute respectability of class asserts itself, and the crowd—the "rough"

element being conspicuous by its absence—is far more orderly than any assemblage of a dozen people elsewhere. Imagine a villa at Wimbledon or Putney, and some four or five hundred uninvited people calmly walking into the grounds to look at something they wished to see, without a ghost of a policeman or authority in charge! Yet that was our predicament for an hour or two, and not a leaf, or rosebud, or blade of grass was touched or injured in any way; nor was there a sound to be heard to mar the tranquil beauty of that summer evening. It was

"A beauteous evening, calm and free,"—

in spite of my chronic state of grumbling at the climate and weather I must acknowledge that,—an evening which might have been made to order. Recent rains had washed the surrounding hills, brightened the dust-laden grass to green once more, and freshened up everything. The amphitheatre of rising ground which surrounds Maritzburg had never looked more beautiful with purple and blue shadows passing over it from the slow-sailing clouds above. Towards the west the sky was taking that peculiar amethystic hue which precedes a fine sunset, and the sun itself laid long parting lances of pure golden light across hill and dale. A fresh air came up from the south, blowing softly across the downs, and sleepy, picturesque little Maritzburg—empty for the afternoon of its inhabitants, I should fancy—nestled cosily up against the undulating ground opposite.

Then, to come nearer home, just outside our sod-fence a line of dusky faces rose above the ferns and waving grasses, faces whose gleaming eyes were riveted on the knot of performers within. The little drive and garden paths were crowded with strangers, white and coloured; all, as I said before, perfectly quiet and orderly, but evidently interested and amused. A semi-circle of black girls and women,—some in civilised garb, some in coarsest drapery, with rings and beads on wrist and neck, some with downy babies slung at their backs, but all earnest and intent on their part,—stood like the chorus of a Greek play, beating their hands together, and singing a low, monotonous chant, the measure and rhythm of which changed every now and again with a stamp and a swing. A pace or two in front of these singers stood the witch-finders, in full ceremonial dress.

Collectively they are known by the name of the "Isinyanga" or "Abangoma," but each had, of course, her distinctive name, and each belonged to a separate tribe. Conspicuous from her great height, Nozinyanga first caught my eye under floating helmet-like plume of the tail feathers of the saka-bula bird shading her fierce face, made still more gruesome by wafers of red paint on cheek and brow. In her right hand she held a light sheaf of assegais or lances, and on her left arm was slung a small and pretty shield of dappled ox hide. Her petticoat was less characteristic than that of her sister-performers, being made of a couple of large gay handkerchiefs, worn kilt-wise. But she



HEAD-DRESS OF A WITCHFINDER.—*Page* 176.

made up for this shortcoming of characteristic decoration in her skirts by the splendour of the bead necklaces, fringes of goats' hair, and scarlet tassels with which she was covered from throat to waist. A baldric of leopard skin was fastened with huge brazen knobs across her capacious chest, and down her back hung a beautifully dried and flattened skin of an enormous boa-constrictor. This creature must have been of a prodigious length, for whilst its hooded head was fastened at the broad nape of Nozinyanga's neck, its tail dropped some two feet or so on the ground behind her. Now Nozinyanga stood something like six feet two inches on her bare feet. Although I first looked at her, attracted by her tall stature and defiant pose, the proceedings were really opened by a small, lithe woman, with a wonderfully pathetic, wistful face, who seemed more in earnest than her big sisters, and who had, in her day, brushed away many a man's life with the quagga's tail she brandished so harmlessly.

To make you understand the terrible interest attaching to these women, I ought here to explain that it used to be the custom whenever anything went wrong, either politically or socially, among the Zulus or other tribes, to attribute the shortcomings to witch-agency. The next step to be taken, after coming to this resolution, was to seek out and destroy the witch or witches; and for this purpose a great meeting would be summoned by order of the king, and under his superintendence, a large ring, some four

or five deep, of natives would be made to sit trembling and in fear of their lives on the ground. In the centre of these danced the witch-finders, or witch-doctors, and as they gradually lashed themselves up to a frantic state of frenzy, bordering in fact on demoniacal possession, they lightly switched with this quagga-tail one or other of the quivering spectators. No sooner had the fatal brush passed over the victim than he was dragged away and butchered on the spot; and not only he, but all the living things in his hut—wives and children, dogs and cats,—not a stick left standing, or a living creature breathing. Sometimes a whole kraal was exterminated in this fashion; and it need not be told what a method it became of gratifying private revenge and paying off old scores. Of all the blessings, so unwillingly and grudgingly admitted, which even our partial civilization has wrought among these difficult, lazy, and yet pugnacious Kafir people, none can be greater surely than the rule which strictly prohibits this sort of lynch-law from being carried out anywhere, under any circumstances, by these priestesses of a cruel faith. Now perhaps you see why there was such a strong under-current of interest and excitement beneath the light laughter and frolic of our summer afternoon tea-party.

Nozilwane was the name of this terrible little sorceress, who frightened more than one of us more thoroughly than we should like to acknowledge, peering up in our faces as she hung about the group of guests, with a weird, wistful glance which was both

uncanny and uncomfortable. She was really beautifully dressed for her part, in lynx skins folded over and over from waist to knee, the upper part of her body being covered by strings of wild beasts' teeth and fangs, beads, skeins of brilliantly-hued yarn, strips of snakes' skin and fringes of Angora-goat fleece. This made a singularly effective and graceful decoration, worn round the body and above each elbow and falling in soft white flakes among the gay colouring and against the dusky skin. Lynx tails hung down like lappets on each side of her face which was overshadowed and almost hidden by the profusion of sakabula feathers. This bird has a very beautiful plumage, and is sufficiently rare for the natives to attach a peculiar value and charm to the tail-feathers; they are like those of a young cock, curved and slender, and of a dark chestnut colour, with a white eye at the extreme tip of each feather. Among this floating and thick plumage, small bladders were interspersed, and skewers or pins fashioned out of tusks. All the witch-finders wore their own hair, or rather wool, alike: that is, highly greased, and twisted up with twine until it loses the appearance of hair completely, and hangs around their faces like a thick fringe, dyed deep red.

Nozilwane stepped out with a creeping, cat-like gesture, bent double, as if she were seeking out a trail. Every movement of her undulating body kept time to the beat of the girls' hands and the low crooning chant they sang. Presently she affected to find the clue she

sought, and sprang aloft with a series of wild pirouettes, shaking her spears and brandishing her little shield in a frenzied fashion. But Nowaruso, albeit much fatter and in less good condition than the lady of the lynx-skins, was determined that *she* should not remain the cynosure of our eyes, and she too, with a yell and a caper, cut into the dance to the sound of louder grunts and faster hand-claps. Nowaruso turned her back to us a good deal in her performances, conscious of a magnificent snake-skin, studded besides in a regular pattern with brass-headed nails, which floated like a streamer down her back. She wore a magnificent kilt of leopard skins, decorated with red rosettes, and her toilette was altogether more careful and artistic than any of the others. Her bangles were brighter, her goat-fringes whiter, and her face more carefully painted. Yet Nozilwane held her own gallantly in virtue of being a mere bag of bones, and also having youth and a firm belief in herself on her side. The others, though they all joined in and hunted out a phantom foe, and triumphed over his discovery in turn, soon became breathless and exhausted, and were glad to be led away by some of the attendant women, to be anointed and to drink water. Besides which, they were all of a certain age, and less inclined to frisk about than the agile Nozilwane.

As for great big Nozimyanga, she danced like Queen Elizabeth, "high and disposedly,"—and no wonder, for I should think she weighed at least fifteen



stone. Ungiteni, in a petticoat of white Angora goat-skin, and a *corsage* of bladders and teeth, heads and viper skins, was nothing remarkable; neither was Um-à-noujozzla, a melancholy-looking personage, with an enormous wig-like coiffure of red woollen ringlets and white skewers. Her physiognomy, too, was a trifle more stolid and commonplace than that of her comrades; and altogether she gave me the impression of being a sensible, respectable woman, who was very much ashamed of herself for playing such antics. However, she brandished her divining-brush with the rest, and cut in now and then to "keep the flure" with the untiring Nozilwane. All this time the chanting and hand-beating never ceased; the babies dozed placidly behind their mothers' backs, and we all began to think fondly of a second cup of tea.

The sun had now quite dropt behind the high hills to the west, and was sending long rays right up across the tranquil sky. We felt we had nearly had enough of imaginary witch-finding, and looked about for some means of ending the affair. "Let us test their powers of finding things. I have lost a silver pipe-stem, which I value much," whispered one of the party. So the five wise women were bidden to discover what was lost, and where it was to be found. They set about this in a curious and interesting way, which reminded one rather of the children's game of magic music. In the first place it was a relief to know there were not any ghastly recollections attached to this performance, and in the next, one could better under-

stand by the pantomimes what they were about. In front of us, squatted on heels and haunches a semi-circle of about a dozen men, who were supposed to have invoked the aid of the sisterhood to find some lost property. These men, however, did not in the least know what was asked for, and were told to go on with their part until a signal was given that the article had been named. So they all addressed themselves to the business in hand with the utmost seriousness and good faith. I must mention that these men were all highly respectable: head men, "indunas," in fact; each worth a good herd of cows at least, and much "portable property." In every-day life it would have been hard to beat them for shrewd common sense, and I make bold to say their grasp of intellect and power of comprehension would be a good deal higher than that of the ordinary middle-class English farmer, whose ideas are bounded by the horizon of his own fields. Well, in spite of the constant contact with civilization, in spite of missionary and schoolmaster, it was easy to perceive that the old savage instincts and beliefs were there, strong as ever, and that these men, though they affected to take it all as we did, as an afternoon's frolic, were firm believers in the mystic power of the "Isinyanga," else they never could have played their parts so well, so eagerly and with such vivid interest.

"What is it the Inkos' has lost?" they cried: "discover, reveal, make plain to us."

It was a good moment in which to try the experi-

ment, because all the singing and dancing had worked the "Isinyanga" up to a high pitch of enthusiasm and excitement, and the inspiration was held to be complete; so, without hesitation, Nowaruso accepted the men's challenge, and cried, "Sing for me: make a cadence for me." Then, after a moment's pause, she went on in rapid, broken utterance, in her own language:—

"Is this real? is it a test? is it but a show? Do the white chiefs want to laugh at our pretensions? Has the white lady called us only to show other white people that we can do nothing? Is anything really lost? is it not hidden? No: it *is* lost. Is it lost by a black person? No: a white person has lost it. Is it lost by the great white chief (meaning their own King of Hearts, their Native Minister)? No: it is lost by an ordinary white man. Let me see what it is that is lost. Is it money? No. Is it a weighty thing? No: it can be always carried about,—it is not heavy. All people like to carry it, especially the white Inkosi: it is made of the same metal as money. I could tell you more, but there is no earnestness in all this,—it is only a spectacle."

Between each of these short sentences the seeress made a pause, and eagerly scanned the faces of the men before her. For sole reply they gave a loud, simultaneous snap of their finger and thumb, pointing towards the ground as they did so, and shouting but one word, "Yiz-wa (the first syllable tremendously accented and drawn out): discover, reveal!" That is

all they can say to urge her on, for in this case they know not themselves; but the priestesses watch their countenances eagerly, to see if haply there may be, consciously or unconsciously, some sign or token whether, as children say in their games, they are "hot" or not. Nowaruso will say no more: she suspects a trick; but Nozilwane rushes about like one possessed, sobbing, and quivering with excitement, "It is this: it is that!" Gigantic Nozinyanga strikes her lance firmly into the ground, and cries, haughtily, in her own tongue, "It is his watch!" looking round as though daring us to contradict her. The other three join hands, and gallop all round and round, making the most impossible suggestions: the "inquirers" as the kneeling men are called, give them no clue or help,—nothing but the rapid finger-snaps, the hand pointed sternly down to the ground as though they were to seek it there, and the fast following cry, "Yizwa, yizwa!" At last Nozilwane has it: "His pipe: yizwa, yizwa! a thing which has come off his pipe!" And so it is. Nozilwane's pluck, and perseverance, and cunning watching of our faces at each hit she made, have brought her off triumphantly. A grunt and murmur of admiration goes round. The Indunas jump up, and subside into ebony images of impassive respectability. The chorus, surely weary by this time, breaks up into knots; and the wearied sisterhood drop, as if by one accord, on their knees, sitting back on their heels, before me, raise their right hand in salutation, and deliver themselves, in answer

to my thanks, of a little speech of which this is as close a translation as it is possible to get of so dissimilar a language:—

"Messages were sent to us at our kraals that an English lady who loved our people wished to see us and witness our customs. When we heard these messages our hearts said 'Go to the English lady,' so we have come, and now our hearts are filled with pleasure at having seen this lady, and ourselves heard her express her thanks to us. We would also, on our part thank the lady for her kindness and her presents. White people do not believe in our powers, and think that we are mad; but still we know it is not so, and that we really have the powers we profess. So it comes that we are proud this day at being allowed to show ourselves before our great white chief and so many great white people. We thank the lady again, and say for us, O son of Mr. Y——, that we wish her ever to dwell in peace, and we desire for her that her path may always have light."

It was not easy to find anything equally pretty to say in return for this; but I, in my turn, invoked the ready wit and fluent tongue of the "son of Mr. Y——," and I dare say he turned out, as if from me, something very neat and creditable, so we were all mutually pleased with each other.

The twilight—sadly short now—was fast coming on, and all the black people were anxious to get back to their homes. Already the crowd of spectators had melted away like magic, streaming down the green

hill-sides by many a different track. Only a remnant of the body-guard lingered to escort the performers home. As they passed the corner of the verandah where the tea-table was set, I fancied they glanced wistfully at the cakes, so I rather timidly handed a substantial biscuit as big as a saucer, to the huge Nozinyanga, who graciously accepted it, as joyfully as a child would. Another black hand was thrust out directly, and yet another; and so the end was that the tea-tables were cleared then and there of all the eatables, and it was not till every dish was empty that the group moved on, raising a parting cry of 'Inkosa-casa,' and a sort of cheer, or attempt at a cheer. They were so unfeignedly delighted with this sudden, happy thought about the biscuits and cakes, and it was quite a pleasure to see them so good-humoured and docile, moving off the moment they saw I really had exhausted my store, with pretty gestures of gratitude and thanks. We had to content ourselves with bread and butter with our second cup of tea, but we were so tired ourselves and so glad of a little rest and quiet, that I don't think we missed the cakes.

As we sat there enjoying the last lovely gleams of daylight, and chatting over the strange weird scene, we could just hear the distant song of the escort as they took the tired priestesses home, and we all fell to talking of the custom as it used to exist in its old savage force. Many of the gentlemen present had seen or heard terrible instances of the wholesale massacre

which would have followed just such an exhibition as this, had it been in earnest. But I will repeat for you some of the less ghastly stories. One shall be modern and one ancient,—as ancient as fifty years ago, which *is* ancient for oral tradition. The modern one is the tamest, so it shall come first.

Before the law was passed making it wrong to consult these Isinyanga or witch-doctors, a servant belonging to one of the early English settlers lost his savings,—some three or four pounds. He suspected one of his fellow-servants of being the thief, summoned the Isinyanga, and requested his master to "assist" at the ceremony. All the other servants were bidden to assemble themselves, and to do exactly what the witch-finder bade them. She made them sit in a row in front of her, and ordered them, one and all, to bare their throats and chests (for you must remember they were only clothed in the town regulation garb, a shirt and knickerbockers). This they did,—the guilty one with much trepidation you may be sure,—and she fixed her eyes on that little hollow in the neck where the throat joins the body, watching carefully the pulsation of each individual.

"It is thou. No: it is not. It must then be you," and so on, dodging about, pointing first to one and then rapidly wheeling round to fix on another, until the wretched criminal became so nervous, that when she made one of her sudden descents upon him, guided by the bewraying pulse which fluttered and throbbed

with terror and anxiety, he was fain to throw up his hands and confess, praying for mercy. In this case the Isinyanga was merely a shrewd, observant woman, with a strong spice of the detective in her; but they are generally regarded not only as sorceresses, whose superior incantations can discover and bring to light the machinations of the ordinary witch, but as priestesses of a dark and obscure faith.

This other instance of their discernment happened some sixty years ago, when Chaka, the Terrible, was King of the Zulus. The political power of these Isinyanga had then reached a great height in Zululand, and they were in the habit of denouncing as witches, or rather wizards, one after the other of the King's ministers and chieftains. It was difficult to put a stop to these wholesale murders, for the sympathy of the people was always on the side of the witch-finders, cruel though they were. At last the King thought of an expedient. He killed a bullock, and with his own hands smeared its blood over the royal hut in the dead of night. Next day he summoned a Council and announced that some one had been guilty of high treason in defiling the King's hut with blood, and that too when it stood apparently secure from outrage in the very middle of the kraal. What was to be done? The Isinyanga were summoned, and commanded on pain of death to declare who was the criminal. This they were quite ready to do, and named without hesitation one after the other of the great Inkosi, or chieftains, who sat trembling around.

But instead of dooming the wretched victim to death, the *dénouement* resembled closely that of the famous elegy, "The dog it was that died." In other words, the witch-finders who named an Inkosi, heard to their astonishment, that they were to be executed and the denounced victim kept alive. This went on for some time, until one cleverer than the rest, yet afraid of committing himself too much, rose up and said oracularly, "I smell the heavens above!" Chaka took this as a compliment, as well as a guess in the right direction, ordered all the remaining Isinyanga to be slain on the spot, and appointed the fortunate oracle to be his one and only witch-finder for ever after.

Chaka's name will be remembered for many and many a day in Zulu-land and the provinces which border it, by both black and white. It is curious to remember that in the first decade of this century, when Napoleon was mapping out Europe afresh with the bayonet for a stylet, and we were pouring out blood and money like water to check him here and there, Raupehera in New Zealand, and Chaka in Zulu-land were playing precisely a similar game here. Chaka had a wider field for his Alexander-like range for conquest, and he and his wild warriors were wont to dash over the ground like a stream of lava. No place was safe from him, and he was the terror of the unhappy first settlers. Even now his name brings a sense of uneasiness with it, for it is still often used as a spell to rouse

the warrior-spirit which only sleeps in the breasts of the descendants of his wild subjects across the border, ruled now by Cetywayo. Chaka's grave, on a lonely hill-top, is one of the most sacred shrines in the whole country, and many and weird are the legends told about it.

LETTER X.

KAFIR MISSIONS AND MISSIONARIES.

MARITZBURG, *May* 10, 1876.

NO: I will *not* begin about the weather this time. It is a great temptation to do so, because this is the commencement of the winter, and it is on the strength of these coming four months that the reputation of Natal, as possessing the finest climate in the world, is built. Before I came here meteorologists used to tell me that the "average" temperature of Maritzburg was so and so, mentioning something very equable and pleasant; but then you see there is this little difference between weather theories, however scientifically correct they may be, and the practice of the weather itself: it is sadly apt to rush into extremes, and degrees of heat and cold are very different in theory when dotted up, and neatly spread over many weeks, to the experience of the same thing. Then you don't catch cold on paper, nor live in doubt whether to have a fire or open windows

and doors. To keep at all on a level with the thermometer here one needs to dress three or four times a day, and it is quite on the cards that a muslin gown and a sealskin jacket may both be pleasant wear on the same day.

It is certainly cooler—at times quite cold, but the sudden spasms of fierce hot winds and the blazing sun during the mid-day hours appear the more withering and scorching for the contrast with the lower temperature of morning and evening. Still we all keep saying—I yet protest against the formula, but I've no doubt I shall come round presently, and join heart and soul in it—"Natal has the finest climate in the world," although we have to go about like the man in the fable, and alternately wrap our cloaks tightly around us, or throw them wide open to breathe. But there! I said I would not go off into a meteorological report, and I will not be beguiled by the attractions of a grievance, for there is no such satisfactory grievance as weather, into breaking so good a resolution. Rather let me graft upon this monotonous weather-grumble a laugh at the expense of poor Zulu Jack, whom I found the other morning in a state of nervous anxiety over the butter which steadily refused to be spread on a slice of bread for little G——'s consumption.

"Is there such a thing as a charm about you, lady-chief?" Jack demanded, in fluent Zulu. "For this butter is assuredly bewitched: last night I could make slices of buttered bread quite easily—this

morning behold it!" and he exhibited obstinate and isolated dabs of butter sticking about the slice. So you see it *must* be cooler—and so it is, I acknowledge, except on a morning when a hot wind sets in before sunrise.

To show you how perfectly impartial, and unprejudiced even, a woman *can* be, I am prepared to admit that the day last week on which I took a long ride to Edendale, a Mission Station, some half dozen miles away, was as absolutely delightful as a day could well be. It was a grey shady morning, very rare beneath these sunny skies, for clouds generally mean rain or fog; but this day they meant nothing more than the tiniest sprinkle at sun-down, just a few big drops flirted in our faces from the ragged edge of a swiftly sailing thunder-cloud. There was no wind to stir up the dust, and yet air enough to be quite delicious; now and then the sun came out from behind the friendly clouds, creating exquisite effects of light and shadow among the hills through which our road wound. Across many a little tributary of the Umsendusi, by many a still green valley and round many a rocky hill-shoulder, our road lay;—a road which for me was most pleasantly beguiled by stories of Natal as it used to be five and twenty years ago, when lions came down to drink at these streams; when these very plains were thickly studded with buck, eland, buffalo, and big game, whose names would be a treasure of puzzle now to a spelling-bee.

The great want of ever so fair a landscape in these parts is timber. Here and there a deeper shadow in the distant hill-clefts may mean a patch of scrub, but when once you pass the belt of farms which girdle Maritzburg for some four or five miles in every direction, and leave their plantations of gums and poplars, oaks and willows, behind, then there is nothing more to be seen but rolling hill-slopes bare of bush or shrub, until the eye is caught by the trees around the settlement we are on our way to visit. It stands quite far back among the hills, too much under their lee in fact to be quite healthy, I should fancy, for a layer of chilly vaporous air always lurks at the bottom of these folded away valleys, and breeds colds, and ague, and fever. Still it is all inexpressibly home-like and fertile as it lies there nestling up against the high rising ground, with patches of mealies spread in a green fan around, following the course of the winding river in tall green rustling brakes, like sugar-cane. The road, a fairly good one for Natal, was strangely still and silent; quite bereft of sight or sound of animal life. At one of the spruits a couple of timber waggons were out-spanned, but the jaded, tick-covered bullocks gave but little animation to the scene. Farther on, while we cantered easily over a wide plain, still rich in grass, a beautiful little falcon swept across our path. Slow and low was its flight, as though it neither feared nor cared for us, and I had ample time to admire its exquisite plumage and its large keen eye. By and by we came upon

the usual "groups from the antique," in bronze and ebony, working at the road, and as usual doing rather more harm than good. But when we had crossed the last streamlet, and turned up a sort of avenue which led to the main street of the settlement, then there was life and movement enough and to spare. Forth upon the calm air rang the merry voices of children, of women carrying on laughing dialogues across the street, and of men's deeper toned, but quite as fluent, jabber. And here are the speakers themselves greeting us as we leave the shade of the trees and come out upon the wide street rising up before us towards the mountain slope which ends its vista.

Sitting at the doors of their houses are tidy, comfortable-looking men and women, the former busy plaiting, with deft and rapid movements of their lithe fingers, neat baskets and mats of reeds and rushes; the latter either eating mealies, shelling them, or crushing them for market. Everywhere are mealies and children. Fat black babies squat happily in the dust, munching the boiled husk before it is shelled; older children are equally happy cleaning with finger and tongue a big wooden spoon just out of the porridge pot; whilst this same familiar pot, of every conceivable size, but always of the same three-legged shape, something like a gipsy kettle, lurks more or less *en evidence* in the neighbourhood of every house. No grass-thatched huts are here, but thoroughly nice respectable little houses of adobe brick, nearly all of the same simple pattern, with vermilion or yellow

ochre doors, and all half-covered with creepers. Whoever despairs of civilizing the Kafir need only look here and at other similar stations to see how easily he adapts himself to comfortable ways and customs, and in what a decent and orderly fashion he can be trained to live with his fellows.

Edendale is a Wesleyan Mission Station, and the history of its settlement is rather a curious one; curious from its being the result of no costly organisation, no elaborate system of proselytism, but the work of one man originally, and the evident result and effect of a perception on the part of the natives of the benefits of association and civilisation. And here I feel it incumbent on me to bear testimony, not only in this instance and in this colony, to the enormous amount of real, tangible, common-sense good accomplished among the black races all over the world by Wesleyan, Methodist, and Baptist missions and missionaries. I am a staunch Churchwoman myself, and yield to no one in pure love and reverence for my own form of worship; but I do not see why that should hinder me from acknowledging facts which I have noticed all my life. Long ago, in Jamaica, how often in our girlish rambles and rides have my sister and I come suddenly upon a little clearing in the midst of the deep silence and green gloom of a tropical forest. In the centre of the clearing would be a wide thatched barn, with felled trees for seats, and neither door nor window. "What is that?" we would ask of the negro lad who always



SUNDAY AT EDENDALE.—*Page* 197.

rode on a mule behind us to open gates, or tell us the right road home again after an excursion in search of some orchids or parrots' nests.

"Dat Baptist chapel, missis. Wesleyan him hab chapel, too, ober dere. Sunday, good man come preach: tell us poor niggers all good tings; oder days same jempleman teach piccaninnies."

That was the answer, and in those few words would lie the history of years of patient, humble planting of good seed, unnoticed by the more pompous world around. The "minister" works perhaps during the week at some means of support, but devotes most of his scant leisure moments to teaching the little black children. I am so ignorant of the details on which Dissenters differ from us that I dare not go into the subject, but I only know it was the same thing in India. Up in the Himalayas I have come across just the same story scores of times. Whilst our own more costly and elaborate system of organisation is compelled to wait for grants, and certified teachers, and desks, and benches, and heaven knows what, the Baptist or Wesleyan missionary fells a few trees, uses them as walls and seats, thatches the roof of his shelter, and begins then and there to teach the people around him something of the sweet charities and decencies of a Christian life.

Doubtless Edendale had, once upon a time, as humble a beginning; but when I saw it that soft autumn day it was difficult to recall such a chrysalis stage of its existence. On our right hand rose a neat

brick chapel, substantial and handsome enough in its way, with proper seats and good wood-work within. This plain structure, however, cost upwards of a thousand pounds, nearly every penny of which has been contributed by Kafirs, who twenty-five years ago had probably never seen a brick or a bench, and were in every respect as utter savages as you could find anywhere. Nor is this the only place of worship or instruction on the estate, although it is the largest and most expensive; for within the limits of the settlement, or "location," as it is called (only embracing, remember, some 3,600 acres under cultivation), there is another chapel, a third a few miles farther off at a sort of out-station, and no less than four day schools with 200 scholars, and three Sunday schools at which 280 children assemble weekly. All the necessary buildings for these purposes have been erected entirely by and at the expense of the natives, who only now number 800 residents in the village itself. On Sundays, however, I heard with much pleasure, that more than a hundred natives from neighbouring kraals attend the services at the chapels, attracted no doubt in the first instance by the singing; but still one cannot have a better beginning, and the Kafir is quite shrewd enough to contrast his squalid hut, his scanty covering and monotonous food, with the well-clad, well-housed, well-fed members of the little community, of whom he catches this weekly glimpse, and every one of whom, save the pastor, are as black as himself.

But I had better briefly state how the little

settlement first originated. Its founder and organizer was the Rev. James Allison, a Wesleyan missionary, who laboured long and successfully among the Basuto and Amaswazi tribes far away in the interior. Circumstances, external as well as private, into which I need not enter, led to his purchasing from Pretorius, the old Dutch president of Natal, this location or estate, of some 6,500 acres in extent, and settling himself on it. He was followed by a great many of his original flock, who were warmly and personally attached to him, and had faithfully shared his fortunes in the past. In this way the mucleus of a settlement lay ready to his hand, and he seems to have been a man of great business talents and practical turn of mind, as well as a spiritual teacher of no mean ability. The little village I saw the other day was quickly laid out, and the small freehold lots or "erven," as they are called still by their old Dutch name, were readily bought by the native settlers. This was only in 1851, and probably the actual tillage of the soil was not commenced for a year or two later. As I walked through the fertile fields with their rich and abundant crops standing ready for the sickle, or looked down into the sheltered nooks where luxuriant gardens of vegetables flourished, it was difficult to believe that ever since the first blade of grass or corn was put in until now, those fields and gardens had never known any artificial dressing or manuring of any kind or sort. For more than twenty years the soil has vielded abundantly without an hour's rest or

manuring, or any further cultivation than a very light plough could give. The advantages of irrigation, so shamefully overlooked elsewhere, were here abundantly recognised, and every few yards brought one to a diminutive channel made by a hoe in a few minutes, bearing from the hill above a bright trickle down to the gardens and houses. I confess I often thought during that pleasant ramble of the old saying about God helping those who help themselves, for all the comfort and well-to-do-ness which met my eyes every moment proceeded entirely from within. The people had done everything with their own hands, and during the past year had, besides, contributed over £200 to their minister's support.

There have been three or four successors to Mr. Allison, who left the settlement about a dozen years ago, and the minister who offered me, a complete stranger, a most cordial and kindly welcome, showing me everything which could interest me, and readily falling in with my desire to understand it all, was the Rev. Daniel Eva, who has only been in charge of this mission for eighteen months. I was much struck by his report of the cleverness of the native children, only it made me regret still more that they had not better and greater opportunities of being trained all over the colony. In the girls' school I saw a bright-eyed little Kafir maiden, neatly dressed, and with the most charmingly graceful carriage and manner, who was only twelve years old, and the most wonderful arithmetician! She had passed her teacher long ago,

and was getting through her fractions with the ease and rapidity of Babbage's calculating machine. Nothing short of Euclid seemed at all likely to satisfy her appetite for figures. She and her slate were inseparable, and she liked nothing so well as helping the other children with their sums. But indeed they were all very forward with their learning, and did their native teachers great credit. What I longed for more than anything else was to see a regular training school established in this and similar stations, where these clever little monkeys could be trained for future domestic servants for us whites, and good knowledgeable wives for their own people. There was, for some years, an industrial school here, and I was dreadfully sorry to hear it had been given up, but not before it had turned out some very creditable artisans among the boys, all of whom are doing well at their respective trades, and earning their five and six shillings a day as skilled workmen. This school used to receive a yearly grant from government of £100, but when from private reasons it was given up, the grant was of course withdrawn. The existing schools only get a government grant of £50 a year; and small as the sum seems it is yet difficult to expect more from a heavily-taxed white population, who are at this moment busy in preparing a better and more costly method of education than they possess at present for their own children. Still I confess my heart was much drawn to this cheerful, struggling little community, and not only to it, but to its numerous offshoots scattered here and there far away. The Eden-

dale people already look forward to the days when they shall have outgrown their present limits, and have purchased two very large farms a hundred miles farther in the interior, to which several of the original settlers of the parent mission have migrated and so formed a fresh example of thrift and industy and a fresh nucleus of civilisation in another wild part.

There were over a hundred houses in the village (it is called George Town, after Sir George Grey), and into some of these houses I went by special and eager invitation of the owners. You have no idea how clean and comfortable they were, nor what a good notion of decoration the civilised Kafir has. In fact, there was rather too much decoration, as you will admit if I describe one dwelling to you. This particular house stood on high ground, just where the mountain slopes abruptly, so it had a little terrace in front to make the ground level. Below the terrace was a kind of yard in which quantities of fowls scratched and clucked; and beyond that again an acre of garden-ground, every foot of which was planted with potatoes, pumpkins, green peas, and other things. A couple of somewhat steep and rough steps helped us to mount up on the terrace, and then we were ushered, with such a natural pride and delight in a white lady-visitor, into a little flagged passage. On one side was the kitchen and living room, a fair-sized place enough, with substantial tables and chairs, a large open hearth, on which a wood fire was cooking the savoury contents of a big pot. As for the

walls, they were the gayest I ever beheld. Originally white-washed, they had been absolutely covered with brilliant designs in vermilion, cobalt, and yellow ochre, most correctly and symmetrically drawn in geometrical figures. A many-coloured star within a circle was a favourite pattern. The effect was as dazzling as though a kaleidoscope had been suddenly flung against a wall and its gay shapes fixed on it. But grand as was this apartment, it faded into insignificance compared to the drawing-room and "English bedroom," both of which were exhibited to me with much complacency by the smiling owner. Now these rooms had originally been one, and were only divided by a slender partition wall. When the door of the drawing-room was thrown open, I must say, I almost jumped back in alarm at the size of the roses and lilies which seemed about to assault me. I never saw such a wall-paper—never. It would have been a large pattern for, say St. James's Hall—and there it was, flaunting on walls about seven feet by eight. A brilliant crimson flock ground, and these alarming flowers, far larger than life, blooming and nodding all over it. The chairs and sofa were gay with an equally remarkable chintz, and brilliant mats of beads and wool adorned the tables and supported books. China ornaments and pictures were in profusion, though it took time to get accustomed to those roses and lilies and be able to perceive anything else. In one part of the tiny room some bricks had been taken out of the wall and a recess formed, fitted up with shelves, on

which stood more vases and statuettes, the whole being framed and draped with pink calico cut in large vandykes. I must say my black hostess and her numerous female friends, who came flocking to see me, stood out well against this magnificent background, and we all sat for some time exchanging compliments and personal remarks through the medium of an interpreter. But one smiling sable damsel understood English, and it was she who proposed that the "lady-chief" should now be shown the bedroom, which was English fashion. We all flocked into it, gentlemen and all, for it was too amusing to be left out. Sure enough there was a gay iron bedstead, a chest of drawers, and—crowning glory of all—a real dressing-table, complete with pink and white petticoat and toilet glass. The glass might have been six inches square—I don't think it was more, but there was a great deal of wooden frame to it, and it stood among half-a-dozen common china breakfast cups and saucers, which were symmetrically arranged, upside down, on the toilet-table.

"What are these for?" I asked innocently.

"Dat English fashion, missus; all white ladies hab cup-saucers on dem tables like dat."

It would have been the worst possible taste to throw any doubt on this assertion, which we all accepted with perfect gravity and good faith, and then returned to the drawing-room much impressed apparently by the grandeur of the bedroom.

Of course the babies came swarming round, and

very fat and jolly they all looked in their nice cotton frocks or shirts. I did not see a single ragged or squalid or poverty-stricken person in the whole settlement, except one poor mad boy who followed us about, darting behind some shelter whenever he fancied himself observed. Poor fellow, he was quite harmless: a lucky circumstance, for he was of enormous stature and strength. Over his pleasant countenance came a puzzled vacant look every now and then, but nothing repulsive, though his shaggy locks hung about his face like a water spaniel's ears, and he was only wrapped in a coarse blanket. I was sorry to notice a good deal of ophthalmia among the children, and heard that it was often prevalent here. In another house, not quite so gay, I was specially invited to look at the contents of the good wife's wardrobe hung out to air in the garden. She was hugely delighted at my declaring that I should like to borrow some of her smart gowns, especially when I assured her with perfect truth, that I did not possess anything half so fine. Sundry silk dresses of hues like the rainbow waved from the pomegranate bushes; and there were mantles and jackets enough to have started a second-hand clothes shop on the spot. This young woman, who was quite pretty by the way, was the second wife of a rich elderly man, and I wondered what her slight *petite* figure would look like when buried in these large and heavy garments. It chanced to be Saturday, and there was quite as much cleaning and general furbishing up of everything

inside and outside the little houses going on as in an English country village, and far less shrewishness over the process.

I wanted to have one more look at the principal schoolroom, whose scholars were just breaking up for a long play, so we returned ; but only in time for the outburst of liberated children whooping and singing and noisily joyful at the ending of the week's lessons. The little girls dropped their pretty curtseys shyly, but the boys kept to the charming Kafir salutation of throwing up the right hand with its first two fingers extended, and crying "Inkosi." It is a good deal prettier and more graceful than the complicated wave and bow in one which our village children accomplish so awkwardly.

Oh, how I should like to do up that schoolroom, and hang gay prints and picture-lessons on its walls for those bright little creatures to go wild with delight at! There has been so much needed in the settlement that no money has been or can be forthcoming just yet for anything beyond bare necessaries. But the schoolroom wanted "doing up" very much. It was perfectly sweet and clean, and there was no occasion for any inspector to measure out so many cubic feet of air for each child, for a breeze from the mountain was whistling in at every crevice, among the rafters, and the floor was well scrubbed daily ; but it wanted new books, and stands, and forms, and desks,—everything in short, most sadly. Then just think what a boon it would be if the most intelligent and

promising among the girls could be drafted from this school, say at twelve years old, into a training school where they could be taught to sew and to wash, and other homely accomplishments. There is no place in the colony where one can turn for a good female servant, and yet here are all these nice sharp little girls only wanting the opportunity of learning to grow up into capital servants and good future wives, above merely picking mealies or hoeing the ground.

As I have said before, I am no political economist, and the very combination of words frightens me, but still I can't help observing how we are wasting the good material which lies ready to our hands. When one first arrives one is told, as a frightful piece of intelligence, that there are 300,000 Kafirs in Natal and only 17,000 whites. The next remark is that immigration is the cure for all the evils of the country, and that we want more white people. Now it seems to me that is just what we *don't* want,—at least white people of what are called the lower classes. Of course every colony is the better for the introduction of skilled labour and intelligence of every kind, no matter how impecunious it may be. But the first thing a white person of any class at all does here, is to set up Kafirs under him, whom he knocks about as much as he dares, complaining all the time of their ignorance and stupidity. Everybody turns at once into a master and an independent gentleman with black servants under him, and the result is that it is impossible to get the simplest thing properly done.

for the white people are too fine, and the black ones too ignorant or too lazy. Then there is an outcry at the chronic state of muddle and discomfort we all live in. English servants directly expect two or three Kafirs under them to do their work, and really no one, except ladies and gentlemen, seem to do anything, save by deputy. Now if we were only to import a small number of teachers and trained artisans of the highest procurable degree of efficiency, we could establish training schools in connection with the missions which are scattered all over the country and which have been doing an immense amount of good silently all these years. In this way we might gradually use up the material we have all ready to our hand in these swarming black people; and it appears to me as if it would be more likely to succeed than bringing shiploads of ignorant, idle whites into the colony. There is no doubt about it, Natal will never be an attractive country to European immigrants, and if it is not to be fairly crowded out of the list of progressive English colonies by its black population, we must devise some scheme for bringing them into the great brotherhood of civilisation. They are undoubtedly an intelligent people, good-humoured and easy to manage. Their laziness is their great drawback, but at such a settlement as Edendale I heard no complaints, and certainly there were no signs of it. No one learns more readily than a savage how good are clothes, and shelter, and the thousand comforts of civilised people. Unhappily he learns the evil with

the good, especially in the towns, but that is our own fault. In a climate with so many cold days the want of clothing is severely felt by the Kafirs, and it is one of the first inducements to work. Then they very soon learn to appreciate the comfort of a better dwelling than their dark huts; and a wish for more nourishing food follows next. It is easier to get at the children, and form their habits and ideas, than to change those of the grown-up men, — for the women scarcely count for anything at present in a scheme of improvement. They are mere hewers of wood and drawers of water. So the end of it all is that I want some of you rich people to encourage the Edendale settlers by helping them with their existing schools, and, if possible, setting up training schools where boys could be taught carpentering and other trades, and the girls housewifery; and I want the same idea taken up, and enlarged, and gradually carried out on a grand scale all over the country.

There are several Norwegian Missions established on the borders of Zululand, presided over by Bishop Schreuder, and I have been so immensely interested in the Bishop's report of a visit he paid last year to Cetywayo (there is a click in the C), the Zulu King, that I have copied some of it out of a Blue-Book for you. Do you know there is a very wrong impression abroad about blue-books? They contain the most interesting reading possible, full of details of colonial difficulties and dangers, which are not to be met with anywhere else, and I have never been better entertained than by

turning over the leaves of one whenever it is my good fortune to come across it. I remember one in particular upon Japan, beautifully written, and as thrillingly sensational as any of Miss Braddon's novels. However, you shall judge for yourself of the Bishop's narrative. I will only mention,—what he is too modest to cause to appear here, and which was told me by other people,—that he is one of the most zealous and fearless of the great band of missionaries, beloved and respected by black and white. In fact, my informant managed to convey a very good impression of the Bishop's character to me when he summed up his panegyric in true colonial phraseology, though I quite admit that it does not sound sufficiently respectful when applied to a Bishop: "He is a first-rate fellow all round."

This document, which I have shortened a little, was addressed as a letter to our Minister for Native Affairs, and has thus become public property, read and reread with deep interest by us here, and likely, I am sure, to please a wider circle.

"UNTUNJAMBILI, *August* 20, 1875.

"DEAR SIR,—I beg to send you a short sketch of my last trip to and interview with the Zulu King, in order to present to him your report of your embassy, 1873, and leave it to your discretion to lay before His Excellency the whole or a part of this sketch, got up in a language foreign to me.

"After an irksome travelling right across the Tugela from here to Undi, I arrived the fifth day (August 5) at the King's head kraal, sufficiently early to have a preliminary interview with the head men then present, — viz., Umjamana, Usegetwayo, Uganze, Uzetzalusa, Untzingwayo, &c.,—and, according to Zulu etiquette, laid before them the substance of my message in the main points, the same as I, the day after (6th August), told the King.

"(N.B.—In the course of the evening one of the head men hinted to me that as regards the killing of people all was not as it ought to be, and that I ought to press the matter when I had the interview with the King, as he needed to have his memory—I would rather say his conscience, for his memory is still very good, even remarkably good—stirred up, and that the present occasion was the very time to do that. The result proved this to be a very safe and timely hint.)

"They spent the forenoon communicating in their bulky way this news to the King, so it was midday before I got an interview with the King, when I opened the interview, verbatim, thus:—

"'My arrival here to-day is not on my own account. I have come at the request of the Chiefs across (the Tugela), to cause you to receive by hand and by mouth a book, which has come from Victoria, the Queen of the English, the book of the new laws of this Zulu country, which Somtseu (Mr. Shepstone) proclaimed publicly at Umlambongwenya the day he, being called

to do so, set you apart to be King of the Zulus. Victoria, Queen of the English, says, 'I and my great headmen (Ministers) have read the new laws of the Zulu country, which you, King, and all the Zulus, agreed to with Somtseu; and as we adhere to our words, so also I wish you, Chief of the Zulus, to hold fast to these words of yours of this law which you agreed to adhere to the day you were made King by Mr. Shepstone, who was sent to do that by the Government of Natal. I have now finished; this is the only word I have brought with me from the Chiefs across (the Tugela).'

"The royal inscription of the copy was of course literally translated.

"After having thus delivered the Government message entrusted to me, I added, in the way of explaining to the King and his Councillors, the merits of the case at issue, by saying,—

"'You have heard the Government word, but that you may clearly see the line of this book of the new laws, I wish to explain to you as follows: the day the Zulu nation brought the head of the King, laid low, four oxen, to the Government, the Zulu nation asked that Mr. Shepstone might come and proclaim the new laws of Zululand, and set apart the real royal child, because they no longer had power of themselves to set apart for themselves a King. Mr. Shepstone came, and began by consulting you, the Zulu nation, at Umlambongwenya on the fifth day of the week, on all the points of the new law which he had been sent

for to proclaim; and he conversed with you until the sun went down, having begun early in the day. He then left you Zulus to consult together, and investigate the new laws on the last day of the week and on the Sunday; and when Mr. Shepstone returned to the waggons (camp), he wrote in a book all the points of the new law, and on Monday he again came with all his attendants, and it was in accordance with his previous arrangement with you; and he came to the Umlambongwenya, the residence appointed for the purpose, that he might set apart in becoming manner the young king. We all were present; we heard him, standing publicly, holding in his hand a paper, and pointing to it, saying, 'That forgetfulness may never, never happen, I have written in this paper, all the points of the new laws of the country which we agreed upon two days ago and to-day, in the presence of all the Zulu nation, the royal children, and the nobles;' and he then handed that paper to his son, that it might be accessible, and speak when he himself is no more; and this proclamation of the new laws was confirmed by the English custom of firing cannons seventeen times, and according to the Zulu, by the striking of shields. On the second day of the week, Mr. Shepstone returned to the Umlambongwenya, to take his leave of the King, and again the points of the new law were explained; and Uttamn (Cetywayo's brother) explained to Mr. Shepstone the history of this house; and on the third day the nobles all went to the waggons (camp), being sent to the

King to take leave, and Mr. Shepstone went home satisfied; and when he returned to the colony he wrote this book of the narrative of his journey and his work in Zululand; and as is done (in the colony), then he sent it to the Governor, and the Governor read it, and read it all, and said the work of Somtseu is good, and the new laws of the Zulu country are good; and as is done there too, he sent it forward to Victoria, the Queen of the English; and Victoria sent back this book of the new laws by the same way to the Governor, and the Governor returned it to Somtseu, and here it is come back to its work (discharge its function) in Zululand, where it was set up to rule over you. And as Victoria binds herself by her words, so are you also, King, and you, the Zulu nation, bound by this new law made for you here by Somtseu at Umlambongwenya. And this is the generation of this book of the new law. It was born an infant; it went across (the water), the child of a King to seek for kingship, and it found it; it was made King far away, and here it is returned with its rank to its own country, Zululand; therefore do not say it is only the book that speaks. No: I tell you, Zulus, of a truth, that this book has to-day rank; it took that rank beyond (the water), it has come back a King, and is supreme in this country.

"'The words of the Governor are finished, and my explanation is finished; but there are small items of news which I wish to tell in your ears, which the authorities (in Natal) did not tell me, but which I

speak for myself, because I wish to see for you and reprove you gently, that you may understand.'

"Uganze then commenced in his usual tattling way to make some remarks, that they, as black people, did not understand books and the value of such written documents; whereupon I said to him, 'That won't do, Ganze; that you, after having applied, as in the present case, to people who transact business through written documents, now afterwards say you do not understand the value of books. You all know very well that book-rules are supreme with white people; it is, therefore, of no use that you, after having obtained what you wanted from the white people, now come and plead ignorance about books. If you don't know yourselves to read books, there is nothing else for you to be done but to get a trustworthy person to read for you, or learn to read yourselves.'

"By these remarks I stopped effectually all further talk of that kind; and, evidently displeased at Uganze's talk, the King repeated very correctly all I had endeavoured to say. (You know the King has a good memory.)

"While I was translating, the King and his nobles often expressed their astonishment, uttering occasionally that it was as if they were living the thing over again, and that what was translated was exactly what was spoken and transacted in your way to and under your stay at the place of encampment; and, having finished, I told them that the fulness and correctness

of the details of the report was a natural result of the habit of white people under such circumstances—daily to take down in writing what transpired, in order not to forget it itself long time afterwards.

"As the King and his nobles now entered upon a discussion of the merits of the new laws, as set forth in your report, and this discussion evidently would take the turn of being an answer to the message delivered, I found it necessary to tell them that I had received no commission to bring back any answer to the Government message, and stated my own private opinion about not having received such commission by saying most explicitly, 'My opinion is that the chiefs across the Tugela did not tell me to take back to them your answer, because your right words to adhere to the new law are completed. They are many: no more are necessary. The thing wanted now is your acts, in accordance with the law.'

"Here, again, Uganze asked what I meant by acts; and the answer was, that you rule and manage this Zululand in accordance with the new law, and never overstep it; and I explained this further by telling them frankly that many reports circulated in Natal of the extensive killing of people all over the Zululand; that from the time I this year had crossed the Tugela, Natal people had with one mouth asked me if the killing of people in Zululand now really was carried on to such an extent as reported, in spite of the new law; that I had not with mine own eyes seen any corpse, and personally only knew of them

said to have been killed; that I myself had my information principally from the same sources as people in Natal, and often from Natal newspapers; that I myself personally believed that there were some, and, perhaps, too much foundation for said reports; there were many who pretended having seen corpses of people killed both with guns and spears. And, after having lectured my Zulu audience very earnestly upon this vital point, I concluded, saying, 'Well-wishers of the Zulus are very sorry to hear of such things, as they certainly had hoped that the new constitution would have remedied this sad shedding of blood; while, on the other hand, people who did not care whether the Zulu nation was ruined or not, merely laughed at the idea that any one ever could have entertained the hope of altering or amending the old-cherished Zulu practice of bloodshed, as the Zulus were such an irrecoverable set of man-butchers. Further, I tell you seriously, King, your reputation is bad among the whites; and although it is not as yet officially reported to the Government, still it has come to its ears, all these bloody rumours, and nobody can tell what may be the consequences hereafter—to-morrow.'

"The King and his Izinduna seemed wonderfully tame,—even conscience-smitten all along, while the rumours were mentioned; for I had expected some of their usual unruly excitement; but nothing of that kind was seen.

"Indeed, as the King even assented to these my

remarks; so the Izinduna found themselves deserted and silenced. Umjamana only tried to put in a few very tame remarks of his usual ones, but I quickly brought him to his senses by remembering him sharply of his sayings and doings at the installation. I now thought it high time to cut the further parlance short, by saying, 'I find that I am going to be dragged into an argument about matters that are no business of mine, and I will, therefore, talk no more of these things, for the new law owners are still alive; and, moreover, the new law is there invested with undeniable royalty; so that even when Her Majesty Victoria, her present Councillors, and the rest of us, are no more, the Umteto will be there, and numerous copies of it are in the hands of the white people, so that they at present and in future times will be able to compare whether the doings of yours (Zulu) are in accordance or at variance with that law, and take their measures accordingly. Victoria binds herself by books, and so you are bound by this book of new law that now is ruling supreme; that is the long and short of it, for this book of the law will decay with the country. I have now talked myself tired, finished my verbal errand to you, King, and now I will hand over to you this splendid copy of the new law.' He then said, 'Lay it down here' (pointing to the mat under his feet.) 'No,' I replied: 'that won't do; the book is not at your feet, but you are at the feet of the book; and if my hands are not too good to hand it over to you, your hands ought not to be too good to receive it.

Don't make any difficulty.' So he received the copy with his hands, laid it himself on the mat, placed both his elbows on his knees, and holding, bent over, his head between his hands, uttered that peculiar native exclamation, equivalent to 'Oh dear, oh dear: what a man is this!'

"The King evidently felt himself so out of his depth that he quite forgot his usual final topics, begging for a royal cloak (the standing topic of late) or some similar thing, but dropped at last into begging for a dog to bark for him at night.

"Thinking that it would do them (the King and Councillors) good to hear a bit of those proceedings, I inserted a few words about the contemplated and proposed federation between the Colony of Natal, Cape, the Transvaal, and Orange States, by mentioning that an important letter from the great people beyond the water had come and proposed a grand meeting of men chosen from these four States to deliberate of the best mode of establishing such federation among themselves, and the advantage and importance of this federation, which I tried to point out by a few practical instances. The King and his Indunas now insisted upon my not leaving before next morning, as the King wanted to prepare for me (get me some living beef), and in the course of the evening I got a special message from him to you to get from a doctor medicine for a complaint he had in the chest, rising at times from regions about the liver, and medicine for an Induna, who of late had been completely deaf. The

messenger also told that the King already had sent to you for medicines, but as yet got no answer. I think that he has found out that it comes very expensive to call a dotela from Natal, and that it therefore would be cheapest to get the aid of genuine doctors through your kind unpaid assistance.

"Under the conversation with the King, the headman Usegetwayo (a rather stupid man, but whose assumed grandeur is so great and supercilious that he pretended never to know anybody, but always must ask somebody who this is) asked in his well-known hoarse way, 'Who is he there who speaks with the King?' (meaning me). Umajamana answered, 'Bishop Schreuder, native man; he is Panda's old headman. You are joking in saying you don't know him; it was he for whom they cut off the large bit of land at Enlumeni.' (One of my Christian natives present overheard this conversation getting on in a subdued tone while I was speaking with the King.)

"When our interview commenced, the King seemed rather sulky, but got gradually brighter, at least very tame, which hardly could have been expected after such dusky beginning, for which there were also other reasons needless to specify here.

"I remain, &c.,

(Signed) "H. SCHREUDER."

LETTER XI.

A BAZAAR AND A PICNIC IN AFRICA.

MARITZBURG, *June* 3, 1876.

DUST and the Bazaar: those are the only topics I have for you. Perhaps I ought to put the Bazaar first, for it is past and over, to the intense thankfulness of everybody, buyers and sellers included; whereas the dust abides with us for ever, and increases in volume and density and restlessness more and more. But still here is a little bit of bracing, healthy weather, and we enjoy every moment of it, and congratulate each other upon it, and boast once more to new comers that we possess "the finest climate in the world." This remark rather died out in the summer, but is again to be heard on all sides now, and I am not strong-minded enough to take up lance and casque and tilt against it. Besides which it would really be very pleasant, if only the tanks were not dry, the cows giving but a tea-cupful of milk a day for want of grass; whilst butter is half-a-crown a pound, and of a rancid

cheesiness, trying to the consumer. Still it is bright and sunny and fresh all day,—too hot indeed in the sun, and generally bitterly cold in the evening and night.

I am more thankful than words can express that we live out of the town, on account of the dust, though the pretty green slopes around are sere and yellow now, with here and there vast patches of black, where the fires rage night and day among the tall grass. About this season prudent people burn strips around their fences and trees to check any vagrant fire, for there is so little timber that the few gum trees are precious things not to be shrivelled up in an hour by fast travelling flames for want of precautions. The spruits or brooks run low in their beds, the ditches are dry, the wells have only a bucketful of muddy water and a good many frogs in them, and the tanks are failing one after the other. Yet this is only the beginning of winter, and I am told that I don't yet know what dust and drought mean. I begin to think affectionately of those nice heavy thunder showers every evening, and to long to see again the familiar bank of cloud peeping up over that high hill to the west, precursor of a deluge. Well, well,—there is no satisfying some people. I am ready to swallow my share of dust as uncomplainingly as may be, but I confess to a horrible anxiety as to what we are all to do for milk for the babies presently. Every two or three days I get a polite note from whoever is supplying me with milk, to say they are

extremely sorry to state that they shall be obliged to discontinue doing so, as their cows don't give a pint a day amongst them all, and the little which is to be had is naturally enormously dear. F—— steadily declines to buy a cow, because he says he knows it will be just like all the rest; but I think if I only had a cow I should contrive to find food somewhere for it. I see those horrid tins of preserved milk drawing nearer and nearer day by day!

It is very wrong to pass over our great Bazaar with so little notice. I daresay in England you think that you know something about bazaars, but I assure you you do not: not about such a bazaar as this, at all events. We have been preparing for it, working for it, worrying for it, advertising it, building it—of zinc and calico—decorating it, and generally slaving at it, for a year and more. When I arrived the first words I heard were about the Bazaar. When I tried to get some one to help me with my stall I was laughed at. All the young ladies in the place had been secured months before, as saleswomen. I don't know what I should have done if a very charming lady had not arrived soon after I did. No sooner had she set foot on shore than I rushed at her and snapped her up before any one else knew she had come, for I was quite desperate, and felt it was my only chance. However, luck was on my side, and my fair A.D.C. made up in energy and devotion to the cause for half-a-dozen less enthusiastic assistants.

All this time I have never told you what the Bazaar was for, or why we all threw ourselves into it with so much ardour. It was for the Natal Literary Society, which has been in existence some little time, struggling to form the nucleus of a Public Library and Reading-room, giving lectures, and so forth, to provide some sort of elevating and refining influence for the more thoughtful townspeople. It has been very uphill work, and there is no doubt that the promoters and supporters deserve a good deal of credit. They had met with the usual fate of such pioneers of progress; they had been overwhelmed with discouraging prophecies of all kinds of disaster, but they can turn the tables now on their tormentors. The building did *not* take fire, nor was it robbed: there were no riots; all the boxes arrived in time; everybody was in the sweetest temper; none of the stall-holders died for want of fresh air (these were among the most encouraging prognostics); and last, not least, after paying all expenses, 2,000 guineas stand at the Bank to the credit of the Society. I must say I was astonished at the financial result, and very delighted, too, for it is an excellent undertaking, and one in which I feel the warmest interest, but this sum, large as it is for our slender resources, will only barely build a place suitable for a library and reading-room, and go to form the nucleus of a museum. We want gifts of books, and maps, and prints, and nice things of all kinds; and I hope some day it may occur to some one to help us in this way.

Everybody from far and near came to the bazaar and bought liberally. The things provided were selected with a view to the wants of a community which has not a large margin for luxuries, and although they were very pretty, there was a strong element of practical usefulness in everything. It must have been a perfect carnival for the little ones: such blowing of whistles and trumpets, such beating of drums and tossing of gay balls in the air as was to be seen all around. Little girls walked about hugging newly-acquired dolls with an air of bewildered maternal happiness, whilst on every side you heard boys comparing notes as to the prices of cricket bats; for your true colonial boy has always a keen sense of the value of money or the merits of carpenter's tools. There were contributions from London and Paris, from Italy and Vienna, from India and Australia; to say nothing of Kafir weapons and wooden utensils, live stock, vegetables, and flowers. Everybody responded to our entreaties, and helped us most liberally and kindly, and we are all immensely delighted with the financial result. Some of our best customers were funny old Dutchmen from far up-country, who had come down to the races and the agricultural show which were all going on at the same time. They recklessly bought the most astounding things, but wisely made it a condition of purchase that they should not be required to take away the goods. In fact they hit upon the expedient of presenting to one stall what they bought at another; and one worthy,

who looked for all the world as if he had sat for his portrait in dear old Geoffrey Crayon's *Sketch-book*, brought a large wax doll, dressed as a bride, and implored us to accept it at our stall, and so rid him of its companionship. An immense glass vase was bestowed on us in a similar fashion later on in the evening, and at last we quite came to hail the sight of those huge beaver hats with their broad brims and peaked crowns, as an omen of good fortune. But what I most wanted to see all the time were the heroes of the rocket practice. You do not know perhaps, that delicious and veritable South African story, so I must tell it you; only you ought to see the real Boers, or emigrant farmers, to appreciate it thoroughly.

A little time ago the dwellers in a certain small settlement, far away on the frontier, took alarm at the threatening attitude of their black neighbours. I need not go into the rights, or rather the wrongs, of the story here, but skip all preliminary details and start fair one fine morning when a "Commando" was about to march. Now a "Commando" means a small expedition armed to the teeth, which sets forth to do as much retaliatory mischief as it can. It had occurred to the captains of this warlike force, that a rocket apparatus would be a very fine thing, likely to strike awe into savage tribes, and so would a couple of mountain guns. The necessary funds were forthcoming, and there arrived from England a beautiful little rocket-tube all complete, and the most knowing and destructive of light field-pieces. They reached their

destination in the very nick of time, the eve, in fact, of the departure of this valiant "Commando." It was deemed advisable to make trial of these new weapons before starting, and an order was issued for the "Commando" to assemble a little earlier in the market square, and learn to handle their artillery before marching. Not only did the militia assemble, but all the townsfolk, men, women, and children, clustering like bees round the rocket-tube, which had been placed near the powder magazine so as to be handy to the ammunition. The first difficulty consisted in finding anybody who had ever seen a cannon before; as for a rocket-tube that was indeed a new invention. The most careful search only succeeded in producing a Boer, who had, many, many years ago, made a voyage in an old tea-ship which carried a couple of small guns for firing signals. This valiant gunner was at once elected Commander-in-Chief of Artillery, and everybody stood by to see what would happen. The tube was duly hung on its tripod, and the reluctant fellow-passenger of the two old cannon proceeded to load and attempt to fire it. The loading was comparatively easy; but the firing! I only wish I understood the technical terms used in rocket-practice, but although they have been minutely explained to me half-a-dozen times, I don't feel strong enough on the subject to venture to use them. The results were, that some connecting cord or other having been severed, contrary to the proper method generally pursued in

letting off a rocket, *half* of the projectile took fire, could not escape from the tube on account of the other half blocking up the passage, and there was an awful internal commotion instead of an explosion. The tripod gyrated rapidly, the whizzing and fizzing became more pronounced every moment, at last with a whisk and a bang out rushed the ill-treated and imprisoned rocket. But there was no clear space for it. It ricocheted among the trees, zig-zagging here and there, opening out a lane for itself with lightning speed among the terrified and flustered crowd. There seemed no end to the progress of that blazing stick—a wild cry arose of "The powder magazine!" but before the stick could reach so far, it "brought up all standing" in a waggon, and made one final leap among the oxen, killing two of them, and breaking the leg of a third.

This was an unfortunate beginning for the new captain, but he excused himself on the ground that after all, rockets were not guns—with those he was perfectly familiar, having smoked his pipe often and often on board the tea-ship, long ago, with those two cannon full in view. Yet the peaceablest cannon have a nasty trick of running back and treading on the toes of the bystanders, and to guard against such well-known habits it would be advisable to plant the tail of this little fellow securely in the ground, so that he must perforce keep steady. "Volunteers to the front with spades," was the cry, and a good-sized grave was made for the end of the gun, which was then lightly covered up with earth. There was now

no fear of loading him, and, instead of one, two charges of powder were carefully rammed home, and two shells put in. There was some hitch also about applying the port-fire to this weapon—port-fire not having been known on board the tea-ship—but at last something was ignited, and out jumped *one* shell right into the middle of the market-square, and buried itself in the ground. But, alas and alas! the cannon now behaved in a wholly unexpected manner. It turned itself deliberately over on its back with its muzzle pointing full among the groups of gaping Dutchmen in its rear; its wheels spun round at the rate of a thousand miles an hour, and a fearful growling and sputtering could be heard inside it. The recollection of the second shell now obtruded itself vividly on all minds, and caused a curious stampede among the spectators. The fat Dutchmen looked as if they were playing some child's game. One ran behind another, putting his hands on his shoulders, but no sooner did any person find himself the first of a file than he shook off the detaining hands of the man behind him, and fled to the rear to hold on to his neighbour. However ludicrous this may have looked, it was still very natural, with the muzzle of a half-loaded cannon pointing full towards you, and one is thankful to know that with such dangerous weapons "around" no serious harm was done.[1]

[1] I have told this story to a stalwart R.A., who frankly declares it to be impossible, but that is no concern of mine; I only tell the tale as 'twas told to me and gunners need not read it, that's all.

If you could only see the fellow-countrymen of these brave heroes you would appreciate the story better; their wonderful diversity of height, of breadth, of garb, and equipment. One man will be over six feet high,—a giant in form and build,—mounted on a splendid saddle, fresh from the store, spick and span in all details. His next neighbour in the ranks will be five feet nothing, and an absolute circle as to shape; he will have rolled with difficulty on to the back of a gaunt steed, and his horse-furniture will consist of two old saddle-flaps sewn together with a strip of bullock hide, and with a sheep-skin thrown over all. You may imagine that a regiment thus turned out would look somewhat droll to the eyes of a martinet in such matters, even without the addition of a cannon lying on its back kicking, or a twisting rocket-tube sputtering and fizzing.

June 7.

Let me see what we have been doing since I last wrote. I have had a Kafir princess to tea with me, and we have killed a snake in the baby's nursery,—that is to say Jack killed the snake. Jack does everything in the house, and is at once the most amiable and the cleverest servant I ever had. Not Zulu Jack. *He* is so deaf, poor boy, he is not of much use, except to clean saucepans and wash up pots and pans. He seems to have no sense of smell either, and I have to keep a strict watch over him that he does not introduce a flavour of kerosene oil into everything, by

his partiality for wiping cups and plates with dirty lamp cloths, instead of his own nice clean dusters. But he is very civil and quiet, leisurely in all he does, and a strict Conservative in his notions of work, resenting the least change of employment. No: the other Jack is a tiny little man, also a Zulu, but he speaks English well, and it is his pride and delight to dress as an English "boy," even to the wearing of agonizing tight boots on his bare feet. Jack learns all I can teach him of cooking with perfect ease, and gives us capital meals. He is the bravest of the establishment, and is always to the fore in a scrimmage, generally dealing the *coup de grace* in all combats with snakes.

In this instance my first thought was to call Jack. I had tried to peep into the nursery one sunny midday, to see if the baby was still asleep, and could not imagine what was pressing so hard against the door, preventing my opening it. I determined to see, and lo, round the edge darted the head of a large snake, held well up in air with the forked tongue out! It must have been trying to get itself out of the room, but I shut the door in its face and called for Jack, arming myself with my riding-whip. Jack came running up instantly, but declined all offers of walking-sticks from the hall, having no confidence in English sticks, and preferring to trust only to his own light strong staff. Cautiously we opened the door again; the snake was now drawn up in battle array, coiled in a corner difficult to get at, and with out-stretched neck and

darting head. Jack advanced boldly and fenced a little with the creature, pretending to strike it, but when he saw a good moment he dealt one shrewd blow which proved enough. Then I suddenly became very courageous, after Jack had cried with a grin of modest pride, "Him dead now, Inkosa-casa," and hit it several cuts with my whip, just to show my indignation at its having dared to invade the nursery and to drink up a cup of milk left for the baby. Baby woke up delighted with the scrimmage, and anxious to examine the dead snake, now dangling across Jack's stick.

We all went about with fear and suspicion after that for some days, as all the rooms open on to the verandah, and the snakes are very fond of finding a warm quiet corner to hybernate in. There is now a strict search instituted into all recesses, into cupboards, behind curtains, and especially into boots, but although several snakes have been seen and killed quite close to the house, I am bound to say this is the only one which has come indoors. Frogs hop in whenever they can, and frighten us out of our lives by jumping out upon us in the dark, as we always think it is a snake and not a frog which startles us. It requires a certain amount of persuasion and remonstrance now to induce any of us to go into a room first in the dark; and there have been many false alarms and needless shrieks caused by the lash of one of G.'s many whips, or even a boot-lace getting trodden upon at dusk.

My Kafir princess listened courteously to a highly dramatic narrative of this snake adventure, as conveyed to her through the medium of Maria. But then she listened courteously to everything, and was altogether as perfect a specimen of a well-bred young lady as you would wish to see anywhere. Dignified and self-possessed, without the slightest self-assumption or consciousness, with the air of an empress and the smile of a child, such was Mayikali, a young widow about twenty years of age. Her husband—I can neither spell nor pronounce his name—had been chief of the Putili tribe, whose location is far away to the north-west of us, by Bushman's River, right under the shadow of the great range of the Drakensberg. This tribe came to grief in the late disturbances apropos of Langalibalele, and lost their cattle, and what Mr. Wemmick would call their portable property, in some mysterious way. We evidently consider that it was what the Scotch call "our blame," for every year there is a grant of money from our colonial exchequer to buy this tribe ploughs and hoes, blankets and mealies, and so forth; but whilst the crops are growing it is rather hard times for them, and their pretty chieftainess occasionally comes down to Maritzburg to represent some particular case of suffering or hardship to their kind friend the Minister for Native Affairs, who is always the man they fly to for help in all their troubles. Poor girl, she is going through an anxious time, keeping the clanship open for her only son, a boy of five years old.

I was drinking my afternoon tea as usual in the verandah one cold Sunday afternoon lately, when Mayikali paid me this visit; so I had a good view of her as she walked up the drive, attended by her maid of honour (one of whose duties is to remove stones or other obstructions from her lady's path), and closely followed by about a dozen elderly, grave, "ringed" men, who never leave her, and are, as it were, her body-guard. There was something very pretty and pathetic, to any one knowing how a Kafir woman is despised by her lords and masters, in the devotion and anxious care and respect which these tall warriors and counsellors paid to this gentle-eyed, grave-faced girl. Their pride and delight in my reception of her was the most touching thing in the world. I went to meet her, as she walked at the head of her followers with her graceful carriage and queenly gait. She gave me her hand, smiling charmingly, and I led her up the verandah steps and placed her in a large arm-chair, and two or three gentlemen who chanced to be there raised their hats to her. The delight of her people at all this knew no bounds: their keen dusky faces glowed with pride, and they raised their right hands in salutation before sitting down on the edge of the verandah, all facing their mistress, and hardly taking their eyes off her for a moment. Maria came to interpret for us, which she did very prettily, smiling sweetly; but the great success of the affair came from the baby, who toddled round the corner, and seeing this brightly draped figure in a big chair, threw up his

little hand and cried, "Bayete." It was quite a happy thought, and was rapturously received by the indunas with loud shouts of "Inkose, Inkose!" whilst even the princess looked pleased in her composed manner. I offered her some tea, which she took without milk, managing her cup and saucer and even spoon as if she had been used to it all her life, though I confess to a slight feeling of nervousness, remembering the brittle nature of china as compared to calabashes or to Kafir wooden bowls. Each of her retinue were given a cigar, which they immediately crumbled up and took in the form of snuff with many grateful grunts of satisfaction.

Now there is nothing in the world which palls so soon as compliments, and our conversation being chiefly of this nature began to languish dreadfully. Maria had conveyed to the princess several times my pleasure in receiving her, and my hope that she and her people would soon get over this difficult time and prosper everlastingly. To this the princess had answered that her heart rejoiced at having had its own way and directed her up the hill which led to my house, and that even after she had descended the path again it would eternally remember the white lady. This was indeed a figure of speech, for by dint of living in the verandah, rushing out after the children, and my generally gipsy habits, Mayikali is not very much browner than I am. All this time the little maid of honour had sat shivering close by, munching a large slice of cake, and staring with her

big eyes at my English nurse. She now broke the silence by a fearfully distinct inquiry as to whether that other white woman was not a secondary or subsidiary wife? This question set Maria off into such fits of laughter, and covered poor little Nanna with so much confusion, that as a diversion I brought forward my first gift to the princess, a large crystal cross and pair of earrings. The reason I gave her these ornaments was because I heard she had parted with everything of that sort she possessed in the world to relieve the distresses of her people. The cross hung upon a bright red riband which I tied round her throat. All her followers sprung to their feet, waved their sticks, and cried, "Hail to the chieftainess!" But, alas! there was a professional beggar attached to the party, who evidently considered the opportunity as too good to be lost, and drew Maria aside, suggesting that as the white lady was evidently enormously rich, and very foolish, it would be as well to mention that the princess had only skins of wild beasts to wear (she had on a petticoat or kilt of lynx-skins and her shoulders were wrapped in a gay, striped blanket, which fell in graceful folds nearly to her feet), and suffered horribly from the cold. He added that there never was such a tiresome girl, for she never *would* ask for anything, and how was she to get it without? Besides which, if she had such a dislike to asking for herself, she surely might speak about things for them,—an old coat now, or a hat would be highly acceptable to himself and so would

a little money. But Mayikali turned quite fiercely on him, ordering him to hold his tongue, and demanding if that was the way to receive kindness, to ask for more?

The beggar's remark, however, had the effect of drawing my attention to the princess' scanty garb, —I have said it was a bitterly cold evening,—and to the maid of honour's pronounced and incessant shivering; so nurse and I went to our boxes and had a good hunt in them, returning with a warm knitted petticoat, a shawl, and two sets of flannel bathing dresses! One was perfectly new, of crimson flannel, trimmed with a profusion of white braid: of course this was for the princess; and she and her maiden retired to Maria's room and equipped themselves, finding much difficulty, however, in getting into the bathing suits, and marvelling much at the perplexing fashion in which white women made their clothes. The maid of honour was careful to hang *her* solitary decorations —two small round bits of looking-glass—outside her skeleton suit of blue serge, and we found her an old woollen table-cover, which she arranged into graceful shawl-folds with one clever twist of her skinny little arm. Just as they turned to leave the room, Maria told me that this damsel said, "Now, ma'am, if we only had a little red earth to colour our foreheads, and a few brass rings, we should look very nice;" but the princess rejoined, "Whatever you do, don't ask for anything;" which I must say I thought very nice of her. So I led her back again to her watchful followers

who hailed her improved appearance with loud shouts of delight. She then took her leave, with many simple and graceful protestations of gratitude; but I confess it gave me a pang when she said, with a sigh, "Ah, if all white Inkosa-casa were like you, and kind to us Kafir women!" I could not help thinking how little I had really done, and how much more we might all do. By way of amusing Mayikali, I showed her some large photographs of the Queen and the Royal Family, explaining to her very carefully who they all were. She looked very attentively at her Majesty's portrait, and then held it up to her followers, who rose of their own accord and saluted it with the royal greeting of "Bayete;" and as Mayikali laid it down again she remarked, pensively, "I am very glad the supreme white Chieftainess has such a kind face: I should not be at all afraid of going to tell her any of my troubles: I am sure she is a kind and good lady." Mayikali herself admired the Princess of Wales's portrait immensely, and gazed at it for a long time; but, I am sorry to say, her followers persisted in declaring it was *only* a very pretty girl, and reserved all their grunts and shouts of respectful admiration for a portrait of the Duke of Cambridge, in full uniform: "Oh, the great fighting Inkosi! Look at his sword and the feathers in that beautiful hat! How the hearts of his foes must melt away before his terrible and splendid face!" But, indeed, on each portrait they had some shrewd remark to make, tracing family likenesses with great quickness, and asking minute

questions about relationships, successions, &c. They took a special interest in hearing about the Prince of Wales going to India, and immediately wished H.R.H. would come here and shoot buffalo and hartbeeste.

June 15.

We had such a nice Cockney family pic-nic ten days ago, on Whit-Monday. F—— had been bewailing himself about this holiday beforehand, declaring he should not know what to do with himself, and regretting that holidays had ever been invented, and so on, until I felt that it was absolutely necessary to provide him with some outdoor occupation for the day. There was no anxiety about weather, for it is only too "set fair" all round, and the water shrinks away, and the dust increases upon us day by day. But there was an anxiety about where to go, and how to get to any place. "*Such* a bad road," was the objection raised to every place I proposed, or else it was voted too far. At last all difficulties were met by a suggestion of spending a "happy day" at the falls of the Lower Umgeni, only a dozen miles away, and getting the loan of the mule waggon. Everything was propitious, even to the materials for a cold dinner being handy, and we bundled in ever so many boys, nurse and myself, and Maria in her brightest cotton frock, and literally beaming with smiles, which every now and then broke out into a joyous, childish laugh of pure delight at nothing at all. *She* came to carry

the baby, who loves her better than any one, and who understands Kafir better than English. The great thing was that everybody had the companions they liked: as I have said, baby had his Maria; F—— had secured a pleasant friend to ride with him, so as to be independent of the waggon; G—— had his two favourite little schoolfellows; and I,—well I had the luncheon basket, and that was quite enough for me to think of. I kept remembering spasmodically divers omissions made in the hurry of packing it up; for like all pleasant parties it was quite *à l'imprévu*, and that made me rather anxious.

It was really a delicious morning, sunny and yet cool, with everything around looking bright and glowing under the beautiful light. The near hills seemed to fold the little quiet town in soft round curves, melting and blending into each other; whilst the ever rising and more distant outlines showed exquisite indigo shadows, with bold reliefs of purple and brown. The greenery of spring and summer is all parched and dried away now, but the red African soil takes in the distance warm hues and tints which make up for the delicate colouring of young grass. Here and there as it glows beneath the sun, and a slow-sailing cloud casts a shadow, it changes from its own rich and indescribable colour to the purple of a heather-covered Scotch moor, but whilst one looks the cloud has passed away, the violet tints die out, and it is again a bare, red hill-side which lies before you. A steep hill-side too, for the poor mules; but they breast it

bravely at a jog-trot, with their jangling bells and patient bowed heads, and we are soon at the top, looking down on the clouds of our own dust. The wind, or rather the soft air, for it is hardly a wind, blows straight in our faces as we trot on towards the south-west, and it drives the mass of finely-powdered dust raised by the heels of the six mules far behind us, to our great contentment and comfort. The two gentlemen on horseback are fain to keep clear of us and our dust, and to take a short cut whenever they can get off the high road, which in this case, and at this time of year, is really a very good one. Inside the waggon under the high hood it is deliciously cool, but the boys are in such tearing spirits that I don't know what to do with them. Every now and then when we are going up-hill they jump out of the waggon and search the hill-side for a yellow flower, a sort of everlasting, out of the petals of which they extemporise shrill whistles, and when their invention in this line falls short, Maria steps in with a fresh suggestion. They make fearful pipes of reeds, they chirp like the grasshoppers, they all chatter and laugh together like so many magpies. When I am quite at my wit's end I produce buns, and these keep them quiet for full five minutes, but not longer.

At last, after two hours steady up-hill pulling on the part of the mules, we have reached the great plateau, from which the Umgeni takes its second leap, the first being at Howick. There, the sight of the great river rolling wide and swift between its high

banks keeps the children quiet with surprise and delight for a short space, and before they have found their tongues again we have noisily crossed a resounding wooden bridge, and drawn up at the door of an inn. Here the mules, as well as their Hottentot drivers, find rest and shelter, whilst we are only beginning our day's work. As for the boys, their whole souls are absorbed in their fishing-rods; they grudge the idea of wasting time in eating dinner, and stipulate earnestly that they may be allowed to "eat fast." We find and charter a couple of tall Kafirs to carry the provision baskets; F—— and his companion take careful and tender charge each of a bottle of beer; Maria shoulders the baby; I cling to my little tea-pot; nurse seizes a bottle of milk; and away we all go, down the dusty road again, over the bridge (the boys don't want to go a yard further, for they see some Kafirs fishing below), across a burnt-up meadow, through scrub of terrible thorniness, and so on, guided by the rush and roar of the falling water, to our dining-room among the great boulders, beneath the shade of the chief cascade.

Unlike Howick, and the one grand concentrated leap of the river there, here it tumbles in a dozen places, over a wide semicircular ledge of basalt. It is no joke to any one except the children, who seem to enjoy tumbling about and grazing their elbows and shins, getting over the wet slippery rocks which have to be crossed to get to the place we want. I tremble for the milk and the beer, and the tea-pot

and I slip down repeatedly; but I am under no apprehension about Maria and the baby, for she plants her broad big bare feet firmly on the rocks, and steps over their wet slippery surface with the ease and grace of a stout gazelle. Once, and once only is she in danger, but it is because she is laughing so immoderately at the baby's suggestion, made in lisping Kafir, when he first caught sight of the waterfall, that we should all have a bath there and then.

The falls are not in their fullest splendour to-day, for this is the dry season, and even the great Umgeni acknowledges the drain of burning sunshine day after day, and is rather more economical in her display of tumbling water, and iridescent spray. Still it is very beautiful, and in spite of our hunger,—for we are all well-nigh ravenous,—we climb various rocks of vantage to see the fine semicircle of cascades, gleaming white among tufts of clinging green scrub and bare massive boulders. In the wet season, of course, much that we see now of rock and tree is hidden by the greater volume of water, but they add greatly to the sylvan beauty of the fair scene. It is quite cold in the shade, but we have no choice, for where the sun shines invitingly there is not a foot of level rock, nor an inch of soft white sand. Such an indignant twitter as the birds raise, as we change our dining-place, and they are hardly to be pacified by crumbs and scraps of bread and meat, salad and pudding.

But the days are now so short that we cannot spare ourselves half the time we want, either to eat or rest,

or linger and listen to the great monotonous roar of falling water,—so agitating at first, so soothing after a little while. The boys have bolted their dinner, plunged their heads and hands under a tiny tricklet close by, and are off to the shallows beneath the bridge where the river runs wide and low, some geese are cackling on the boulders, fish leap in the pools, and Kafir lads are laughing and splashing on the brink. We leave baby and his nurses in charge of the birds' dinner until the men return for the lightened baskets, and we three "grown-ups" start for a sharp scramble up the face of the cliff, over the bed of a dry water-course, to look at the wonderful expanse of the great river above, coming down from the purple hills on the horizon, sweeping across the vast, almost level plain in a magnificent tranquil curve, wide as an inland lake, until it falls abruptly, leaping over the precipice before it. Scarcely a ripple on the calm surface, scarcely a quickening of its steady, tranquil flow, and yet it has gone, dropped clean out of sight, and that monotonous roar is the noise of its fall. I should like to see it in summer, when its stately progress is quickened and its limpid waters stained by the overflow of countless lesser streams into its broad bosom, and when its banks are fringed with tufts of tall white arum lilies—now only folded green leaves, shrunken as close to the water's edge as they can get, —and when this carpet of violets beneath our feet is a sheet of blossom, flecked with gayer flowers all over this great spreading veldt. To-day the wish of my

heart, of all our hearts, is for a canoe apiece. Oh for the days of fairy thievery, to be able to swoop down upon Mr. Searle's yard and snatch up three perfect little canoes, paddles, sails, waterproof aprons and all and put them down over there by that clump of lilies and mimosa bushes! What a race we could have for eight clear miles up that shining reach, between banks which are never nearer than sixty or seventy feet to each other, and where the river is as calm as glass, and free from let or hindrance to a canoe for all that distance.

But, alas, there are neither roguish fairies nor stolen canoes to be seen, nothing except one rough and ready fishing-rod and the everlasting mealie-meal worked into a paste for bait. We are too impatient to give it a fair trial, although the fish are leaping all around, for already the sun is travelling fast towards those high western hills, and when once he gets behind the tallest peak darkness will be upon us in five minutes. We should have been much more careful of our minutes even had there not chanced to be an early moon,—already a silver disc in yonder bright blue sky. The homeward path was longer and easier, and led us more circuitously back to the bridge, beneath which I was horrified to find G—— and his friends, their fishing-rods and one small fish left on the bank, disporting themselves in the water with nothing on save their hats. G—— is not at all dismayed at my shrill reproaches to him from the high bridge above, but suggests that I should throw him down

my pocket-handkerchief for a towel, and promises to dress and come up to the house directly. So I, with the thoughts of my tea in my mind, for we have not been able to have a fire at the falls, hurry up to the inn and have time for a look round before the boys are ready.

It is all so odd, such a strange jumble, such a thorough example of the queer upside-down fashion of colonising which reigns here, that I cannot help describing it. A fairly good straggling house, with sufficiently good furniture and plenty of it, and an apparent abundance of good glass and crockery; a sort of bar, also, with substantial array of bottles, and tins of biscuits and preserved meats, and pickles of all sorts. But what I want you to bear in mind is that all this came from England, and has finally been brought up here, nearly seventy miles from the coast, at an enormous trouble and expense. There were several young people about the place, but a white person of that class in Natal is too fine to work, and in five minutes I heard fifty complaints from them of want of labour and of the idleness of the Kafirs. There was no garden, no poultry-yard, no dairy,—here, with the means of irrigation at their very doors, with the possibility of food for cattle all the year round at the cost of a little personal trouble, there is neither a drop of milk nor an ounce of butter to be had; nor an egg,—"the fowl's don't do so very well." I should think not, with such accommodation as they had in the way of water and food. For more

than twenty years that house has stood there; a generation had grown up round it and in it, and yet it might as well have been built last year for all the signs of a homestead about it. There was a mealie patch somewhere, and a plot or two of green forage, and that was all. Now in Australia or New Zealand, in a more rigorous climate, under far greater disadvantages, the dwellers in that house would have had farm-yard and grain fields, garden and poultry-yard, about them in five years, and the necessary labour would have been performed by the master and mistress and their sons and daughters. Here they all sit indoors, listless and discontented, grumbling because the Kafirs won't come and work for them. I can't make it out, and I confess I long to give all this sort of colonists a good shaking, and take away every single Kafir from them. I am sure they would get on a thousand times better.

The only thing is, it is too late to shake them now,—too late to shake energy and thrift into elderly or already grown-up people. They get on very well as it is, they say, and make money, which is all they care for, having no pride in neatness and order, and setting no value on the good opinions of others. They can sell their beer, and pickles, and tins of meat and milk, at double and treble cost price, and that is less fatiguing than digging and fencing and churning. So the tea has no milk, nor the bread any butter, when twenty years ago cows were somewhere about five shillings apiece; and we get on as well as we can

without it ; but I long, up to the very last, to shake them all round, especially the fat, pallid young people. Fortunately for Her Majesty's peace, I refrain from this expression of my opinion, and get myself and all my boys into the mule waggon, and so off again, jogging homewards before the sun has dipped behind that great blue hill. Long ere we have gone half-way the daylight has died away, and the boys find fresh cause for shouts of delight at the fantastic shadows the moon is casting as she glides in and out of her cloud-palaces. It would have been an enchanting drive home, wrapped up to the chin as we all were, except for the dust. What air there was came from behind us, from the same point as it had blown in the morning, but now we carried the dust along with us and were powdered snow-white by it. Every hundred yards or so the drivers put the brake hard down, and whistled to the mules to stop. They did not mind losing sight altogether of the leaders in a dense cloud of dust, nor even of the next pair, but when the wheelers were completely blotted out by the thick stirred-up mass of fine dust, then they thought it high time to pause and let it blow past us.

But this constant stopping made the return journey rather long and tedious, and all the little curly heads were nodding against our shoulders, only rousing up with a flicker of the day's animation when we came to where a grass fire was sweeping over the veldt, and our road crossed a dusty but wide and safe barrier between the sheets of crackling flame. All along the horizon

these blazing belts showed brightly against the deep twilight sky, sometimes racing up the hills, again lighting up the valleys with yellow belt and circle of fire and smoke, but everywhere weird and picturesque beyond the power of words to tell. I noticed during that drive what I have so often observed out here before,—the layers of cold air. Sometimes the wraps became quite oppressive at the top of a hill or even climbing up it; then in crossing a valley or narrow ravine, we seemed to drive into an ice-cold region where we shivered beneath our furs; again, in five minutes, the air in our faces would once more be soft and balmy, crisp indeed and bracing, but many degrees warmer than those narrow Arctic belts here and there.

LETTER XII.

KAFIR WEDDINGS AND KAFIR KRAALS.

MARITZBURG, *July* 3.

I HAVE seen two Kafir weddings lately, and oddly enough by the merest chance, within a day or two of each other. The two extremes of circumstance, the rudest barbarism and the culminating smartness of civilization, seemed to jostle each other before my very eyes as things do in a dream. And they went backwards too, to make it more perplexing, for it was the civilized wedding I saw first,—the wedding of people whose mothers had been bought for so many cows, and whose marriage rites had probably been celebrated with a stick, for your Kafir bridegroom does not understand coyness, and speedily ends the romance of courtship by a few timely cuffs.

Well then, I chanced to go into town one of these fine bright winter mornings (a morning which would be perfect if it were not for the dust), and I saw a crowd round the porch of the principal church. "What

is going on?" I asked naturally, and heard in broken English, dashed with Dutch and Kafir, that there was an "untyado" (excuse phonetic spelling), or "bruit lag," or "wedding." Hardly had I gathered the meaning of all these words,—the English being by far the most difficult to recognise, for they put a click in it,—than the bridal party came out of church, formed themselves into an orderly procession, and commenced to walk up the exceedingly dusty street, two and two. They were escorted by a crowd of well-wishers, and a still greater crowd of spectators,—more or less derisive. But nothing upset the gravity and decorum of the bride and bridegroom, who walked first with a perfectly happy and well-satisfied expression of face. Uniforms were strictly excluded, and the groom and his male friends prided themselves on having discarded all their miscellaneous red coats for the day, and on being attired in suits of ready-made tweed, in which they looked queerer than words can say. Boots also had they on their feet, to their huge discomfort, and white soft felt hats stuck more or less rakishly on their elaborately combed-out woolly pates. The general effect of the gentlemen, I am sorry to say, was that of the Christy minstrels; but the ladies made up for everything.

I wish you could have seen the perfect ease and grace of the bride, as she "paced" along with her flowing white skirts trailing behind her in the dust, and her lace veil thrown over a wreath of orange blossoms and hanging to the ground. It was difficult

to believe that probably not long ago she had worn a sack, or a fold of coarse salempore, as sole clothing. She managed her draperies, all snowy white, and made in the latest fashion, as if she had been used to long gowns all her life, and carried her head as though it had never known red clay or the weight of a basket of mealies. I could not see her features very well, but her face and throat and bare arms were all as black as jet, and shone out in strong relief from among her muslin frills and furbelows. There were many yards of satin ribbon among these same frills, and plenty of artificial flowers; but all was white, shoes and all. I am afraid she had "disremembered" her stockings. The principal couple were closely followed by half-a-dozen sable damsels, also "gowned in pure white," and made wonderful with many bows of blue ribbon. Each maiden was escorted by a groomsman, the rear-guard of guests trailing off into coloured cottons and patched suits. Everybody looked immensely pleased with him and herself, but I gradually lost sight of them in the unfailing cloud of dust which rises on the slightest provocation at this time of the year. I assure you it was a great event, the first smart wedding in Maritzburg among the Kafirs, and I only hope the legal part is all right, and that the bridegroom won't be free to bring home another wife some fine day, to vex the soul of this smart lady. Kafir marriage laws are in a curious state, and present one of the greatest difficulties in the process of grafting civilized habits on the customs of utter barbarism.

In spite of the imposing appearance of bride and bridegroom, in spite of the good sign all this aping of our ways really is, in spite of a hundred considerations of that nature which ought to have weighed with me but did not, I fear I took far more interest in a real Kafir marriage, a portion of whose preliminary proceedings I saw two days after this gala procession in white muslin and grey tweed. I was working in the verandah after breakfast,—for you must know that it is so cold indoors that we all spend the middle part of the day basking, like lizards, in the delicious warmth of sunny air outside,—when I heard a distant noise beyond the sod fence between us and a track leading over the hills, in whose hollows many a Kafir kraal nestles snugly. I knew it must be something unusual, for I saw all our own Kafirs come running out in a state of great excitement, calling to each other to make haste. G——, too, left the funeral obsequies of a cat-murdered pigeon in which he was busily employed, and scampered off to the gate, shouting to me to come and see. So I, who am the idlest mortal in the world, and dearly love an excuse for leaving whatever rational employment I am engaged upon, snatched up the baby, who was supremely happy digging in the dust in the sunshine, called Maria in case there might be anything to explain, and ran off to the gate also. But there was nothing to be seen, only distant dust, and a sound of monotonous singing and loud grunting coming nearer and nearer, with by and by the muffled tread of bare, hurrying

feet shuffling through the soft powdered earth of the track. My own people had clambered up on the fence and were gesticulating wildly and laughing and shouting, Tom waving the great wooden spoon with which he stirs his everlasting "scoff."

"What is it, Maria?" I ask. Maria shakes her head and looks very solemn, saying, "I doan know." But even while she speaks a broad grin breaks all over her face, and she shows her exquisite teeth from ear to ear as she says, half contemptuously, "It's only a wild Kafir wedding, lady. There are the warriors: that's what they do when they don't know any better."

Evidently Maria inclines to the long white muslin gown of the civilized bride which I had minutely described to her, and she turns away in disdain. Yes, here they come, first a body of stalwart warriors dressed in skins, and with immense plumes of feathers on their heads, their lithe, muscular bodies shining like ebony as they flash past me, not so quickly, however, but that they have time for the *politesse* of tossing up shields and spears with a loud shout of "Inkosi!"—which salutation the baby, who takes it entirely to himself, returns with great gravity and unction. These are the vanguard, the flower of Kafir chivalry, who are escorting the daughter of a chieftain to her new home in a kraal on the opposite range of hills. They make it a point of honour to go as quickly as possible, for they are like the stroke oar, and give the time to the others. After them come

the male relatives of the bride, a motley crew, numerous, but altogether wanting in the style and bearing of the warriors. Their garb, too, was a wretched mixture and compromise between clothes and no clothes, and they shuffled breathlessly along, some in sacks over their shoulders, some in old tunics of red or blue and nothing else, and some only in two flaps or aprons. But all wore snuff-boxes in their ears, snuff-boxes made of every conceivable material, hollow reeds, cowries, tiger-cats' teeth, old cartridge cases, acorn shells, empty chrysalises of some large moth, all sorts of miscellaneous rubbish which could by any means be turned to this use.

Then came a more compact and respectable-looking body of men, all with rings on their heads (the Kafir sign and token of well-to-do-ness), with bare legs, but draped in bright-coloured rugs or blankets across their bodies. They too fling up their right arm and cry "Inkosi!" as they race along, but are more intent in urging on their charge, the bride, who is in their midst. Poor girl, she has some five or six miles yet to go, and she looks ready to drop now, but there seems to be no consideration for her fatigue, and I observe that she evidently shrinks from the sticks which her escort flourish about. She is a good-looking, tall girl, with a nice expression, in spite of her jaded and harried air. She only wears a sheet of coarse brownish cloth draped gracefully and decently around her, leaving, however, her straight, shapely legs bare to run. On her right arm she, too,

bears a pretty little shield made of dun and white ox-hide, and her face is smeared over brow and cheeks with red clay, her hair also being tinged with it. She glances wistfully, I fancy, at Maria, standing near me in her good clothes and with her fat comfortable look. Kafir girls dread being married, for it is simply taking a hard place without wages. Love has very rarely anything to do with their union, and yet the only cases of murder of which I have heard have been committed under the influences of either love or jealousy. This has always seemed odd to me, as a Kafir girl does not appear at all prone to one or the other. When I say to Maria, "Perhaps you will want to marry some day, Maria, and leave me?" she shakes her head vehemently and says, "No, no: I should not like to do that. I should have to work much harder, and no one would be kind to me."

Maria too looks compassionately at her savage sister racing along, and murmurs, "Malia would not like to have to run so fast as that." Certainly she is not in good condition for a hand-gallop across these hills, for she is bursting out of all her gowns, although she is growing very tall as well.

There is no other woman in the bridal cavalcade, which is a numerous one, and closes with a perfect mob of youths and boys, grunting and shuffling along. Maria says doubtfully, "I think they are only taking that girl to look at her kraal; she won't be marry just yet, for they say the beer is not ready so soon." This information was shouted out as some of the

party rushed past, but I could not catch the exact words amid the loud monotonous song with a sort of chorus or accompaniment of grunts.

Ever since my arrival I have wanted to see a real Kafir kraal, but the difficulty has been to find one of any size, which yet retains some of its distinctive features. There are numbers of them all about the hills surrounding Maritzburg, but they are poor degenerate things, the homes of a lower class of Kafir,—a savage in his most disgusting and dangerous state of transition, when he is neither one thing nor the other, and has picked up only the vices of civilisation. Such kraals would be unfavourable specimens of a true Kafir village, and only consist of half a dozen ruinous filthy hovels, whose inhabitants will probably beg of you. For some time past I have been inquiring diligently where a really respectable kraal could be found, and at last I heard of one about eight miles off, whose Induna, or head-man, gave it a very good character. Accordingly we set out on a broiling afternoon, so early in the day that the sun was still beating down on us with all his summer trick of glowing heat and a fierce fire of brightest rays. The road is steep, over hill and dale, and it is only when we have climbed to the top of each successive ridge that a breath of cool air greets us. A strange and characteristic panorama gradually spreads itself out before and behind us. After the first steep ascent we lose sight of Maritzburg and its bosky streets. From the next ridge we can see

only the ring of homesteads, which lie in a wide circle outside the primitive little town. Each rising down has a couple or so of these suburban villas, hidden away in gum trees, clinging to its swelling sides. Melancholy-looking sides they are now, and dreary is the immediate country around us, for grass fires have swept the hills for a hundred miles and more; far as the eye can reach all is black and sere and arid, the waggon tracks alone winding about in dusty distinctness. The streams, too, have shrunk away to nothing, and scarcely show between their high banks.

It is a great delight to have the wide view which opens out as we clamber up the rocky track across the highest saddle we have yet needed to mount. Close on our left rises, some three hundred feet straight up against the brass-bright sky, a big bluff, with its basalt sides cut away clean and sharp, as though by a giant's knife. In its cold shade a few stunted bushes are feebly struggling to keep their scraggy leaves and branches together; and on the right the ground falls irregularly away down to a valley, in which are lovely patches of young forage, making a tender green oasis, precious beyond words in contrast with the black and sun-dried desolation of the hills around. Here, too, are the inevitable gum trees, not to be despised at this ugly time of year, although they are, for all the world, like those stiff wooden trees, all of one pattern, peculiar to the toy model villages in the days of our childhood. With quite as little grace and beauty do these gum

trees grow, but yet they are the most valuable things we possess, being excellent natural drainers of marshy soil, kindly absorbers of every stray noxious vapour, and good amateur lightning-conductors into the bargain. Amid these much-abused, not-to-be-done-without trees, then, a gable peeps: it is evidently a thriving comfortable homestead; yet here my friendly guide and companion draws rein, and looks around with deep perplexity on his kindly face.

"How beautiful the view is!" I cry in delight; for indeed the distant sweep of ever-rising mountains, the splendid shadows lying broad and deep over the hill and valleys, the great Umgeni, disdaining even this long drought, and shining here and there like a silver riband, now widening into a mere, now making almost an island of some vast tract of country, but ever "journeying with a gentle ecstasy," is all most beautiful. The burnt-up patches give only a brown umber depth to the shadows on the distant hills, and the rich red soil glows brightly on the bare downs near us, as the westering sun touches and warms them into life and colour. I am well contented to drop the reins on my old horse's neck, whilst I gaze with greedy eyes on the fair scene, which I know will change and darken as I look. Perhaps it is also this thought which makes my companion say anxiously:—

"Yes: but see how fast the sun is dropping behind that high hill; and *where* is the kraal? It

ought to be exactly here, according to Mazimbulu's directions; yet I don't see a sign of it: do you?"

If his eyes, accustomed since childhood to every rock and cranny in these hills could not make out where the kraal hid, little chance was there of mine finding it out. But even he was completely at fault, and looked anxiously around like a deer-hound that has lost the scent. The narrow track before us led straight on into the interior for a couple of hundred miles, and in all the panorama at our feet we could not see trace or sign of living creature, nor could the most absolute silence bring sound of voice or life to our strained ears.

"I dare not take you any farther," Mr. Y—— said: "it is getting much too late already. But how provoking to come all this way and have to go back without finding the kraal."

In vain I tried to comfort him by assurances of how pleasant the ride had been, beguiled by many a hunting story of days when lions and elephants drank at the stream before us, and when no man's hand ever loosed clasp of his gun, sleeping or waking. We had come to see a kraal, and it was an expedition *manqué* if we could not find it. Still the sun seemed in a tremendous hurry to reach the shelter of that high hill yonder, and even I was constrained to acknowledge we must not go farther along the rocky track before us. At this moment of despair there came swiftly and silently round the sharp edge of the bluff just ahead of us, two Kafir women, with large bundles

of fire-wood on their heads, and walking rapidly along as though in a hurry to get home. To my companion Kafir is as familiar as English, so he is at no loss for pleasant words and still more pleasant smiles with which to ask the way to Mazimbulu's kraal. "We go there now, O great chieftain," the women answer with one voice; and true to the savage code of politeness, they betray no surprise as to what *we* can possibly want at their kraal so late. We had scarcely noticed a faint narrow path on the burnt-up ground to our right, but into this the women unhesitatingly struck, and we followed them as best we could. Scarcely three hundred yards away from the main track, round the shoulder of a down, and nestling close in a sort of natural basin scooped out of the hill-side, lay the kraal—silent enough now, for all, except a few old men and babies, were absent. The women, like our guides, were out collecting fire-wood, some of the younger men and bigger children had not yet returned from the town where they had been to sell poultry and eggs, others were still at work for the farmer whose homestead stood a mile or two away. At least a hundred goats were skipping about beneath the steep hill-side down which we had just come, goats who must have ventured to the very edge of the shelf along which our bridle path had lain, and yet who had never by bleat or inquisitive protruded head betrayed their presence. In the centre of the excavation stood a large, high, neatly wattled fence, forming an inclosure for the

cattle at night, a remnant of the custom when Kafir herds were ravaged by wild animals or still wilder neighbours. A very small angle of this place was portioned off as a stye for the biggest and mangiest pig it has ever been my lot to behold: a gaunt and hideous beast, yet the show animal of the kraal, and it was the first object which Mazimbulu pointed out to us. Of course Mazimbulu was at home: what is the use of being an Induna if you have to exert yourself? He came forward at once to receive us, and did the honours of his kraal most thoroughly and with much grace and dignity. Mr. Y—— explained that I was the wife of another Inkosi, and that I was consumed by a desire to see with my own eyes a real Kafir kraal. It is needless to say that this was pleasantly conveyed, and a compliment to this particular kraal neatly introduced here.

Mazimbulu—an immensely tall, powerful, elderly man, 'ringed,' of course, and draped in a large gay blanket—looked at me with half contemptuous surprise, but saluted, to carry off his wonder, and said deprecatingly to Mr. Y——:

"O chief, the chieftainess is welcome. But what a strange people are these whites! They have all they can desire, all that is good and beautiful of their own, and yet they can find pleasure in looking at where we live. Why, chief, you know their horses and dogs have better places to sleep in than we have. It is all most wonderful: but the chieftainess may be sure we

are glad to see her, no matter for what reason she comes."

There was not very much to see after all. About twenty large, substantial, comfortable huts, all of the beehive shape, stood in a crescent, the largest in the middle. This belonged to Mazimbulu, and in front of it knelt his newest wife, resting on her heels, cutting up pumpkins into little bits to make a sort of soup, or what she called "scoff." I think young Mrs. Mazimbulu was about the handsomest and the sulkiest Kafir woman I have yet seen. She was very smart in beads and bangles, her *coiffure* was elaborate and carefully stained red, her blanket and petticoat were gay and warm and new, and yet she looked the very picture of ill-humour. The vicious way she cut up her pumpkins and pitched the slices into a large pot, the sarcastic glances she cast at Mazimbulu as he invited me to enter his hut, declaring that he was so fortunate in the matter of wives that I should find it the pink of cleanliness. Nothing pleased her, and she refused to talk to me, or to "saka bono," or anything. I never saw such a shrew, and wondered whether poor Mazimbulu had not indeed got a handful in this, his latest purchase. And yet he looked quite capable of taking care of himself, and his hand had probably lost none of its old cunning in boxing a refractory bride's ears, —for the dame in question seemed rather on the watch as to how far she might venture to show her temper.

Such a contrast as her healthy vigorous form made

to that of a slight, sickly girl, who crawled out of an adjoining hut to see the wonderful spectacle of an "Inkosa-casa!" This poor thing was a martyr to sciatica, and indeed had rheumatism apparently in all her joints. She moved aside her kilt of lynx skins to show me a terribly swollen knee, saying plaintively in Kafir, "I ache all over for always." Mazimbulu declared, in answer to my earnest inquiries, that they were all very kind to her, and promised faithfully that a shilling which I put in her hand should remain her own property. "Physic or beads, just as she likes," he vowed; but seemed well content when I gave another coin into his own hand for snuff. There were not many babies,—only three or four miserable, sickly little creatures, all over sores and dirt and ophthalmia. Yet the youth who held our horses whilst we walked about, and Mr. Y—— chatted fluently with Mazimbulu, might have stood for the model of a bronze Apollo, so straight and tall and symmetrical were his shapely limbs and his lithe, active young body. He, too, shouted "Inkosa-casa!" in rapturous gratitude for a sixpence, and vowed to bring me fowls to buy whenever the young chickens all about should be big enough.

Mazimbulu's own hut contained little beyond a stool or two, some skins and mats for a bed, a heap of mealie husks with which to replenish the fire, his shield and bundle of assegais and knobkerries. There was another smaller wattled inclosure holding a great store of mealies, and another piled up with splendid

pumpkins. At the exact top of Mazimbulu's hut stood a perfect curiosity-shop of lightning-charms, old spear points, shells, the broken handle of a china jug, a painted portion of some child's toy,—everything which is mysterious or unknown to them must perforce be a lightning-charm. They would no more use a lightning conductor than they would fly, declaring triumphantly that *our* houses, for all their "fire-wires," got more often struck by lightning than their huts. Indeed, Mazimbulu became quite pathetic on the subject of the personal risk I ran on account of my prejudice against his lightning-charms, and hinted that I should come to a bad end some day through it.

By the time we had spent half-an-hour in the kraal the sun had long since gained the shelter of the western hills and sunk below them, taking with him apparently every vestige of daylight out of the sky. No one who had not felt it could believe the rapidity of the change in the temperature. So long as there was sunlight, it was too hot. In half-an-hour it was bitingly, bitterly cold. We could not go fast down the rocky paths, but we cantered over every inch of available space, cantered for the sake of warming ourselves as much as to get home. The young moon gave us light enough to keep on the right track, but I don't think I ever was so cold in my life as when we reached home, about half-past six. The wood fire in the little drawing-room, the only room with a fire-place, seemed indeed delicious, and so did a cup of tea, so hot as to

be almost scalding. I was told that my face was bright blue, and I admit that I came nearer that evening to understanding what being frozen to death meant than I had ever done before. Yet there was not much frost, but one suffered from the reaction after the burning heat of the day and the impossibility of taking any extra wraps with one.

July 12.

Don't think I am going to let you off my usual grumble about the weather. Not a bit of it! It is worse than ever. At this moment a violent and bitterly cold gale of wind is blowing, and I hear the red tiles flying off the house, which I fully expect will be a regular sieve by the time the rains come. Not one drop of rain have we had these two months, and people remark that the dry season is *beginning*. Everything smells and tastes of dust; one's clothes, the furniture, everything. If I sit down in an arm-chair I disturb a cloud of dust; my pillow is, I am convinced, stuffed with it; my writing-table is inches deep in it. All the food is flavoured with it, and Don Quixote's enemies could not more persistently bite the dust than we do at each meal. Yet when I venture to mention this drawback, in answer to the usual question, "Is not this *delicious* weather?" the answer is always, "Oh, but you can have no dust *here:* you should see what it is in town!" Between me and the town is an ever-flying thick scud of dust, through which one can but ill discern the waggons. I wonder

there are no accidents, for I often hear a waggon before or behind me when it is impossible to *see* anything through the choking, suffocating cloud around you. On a still day, when one carries one's own dust quietly along with one, there is nothing for it except to stop at home if you wish to keep your temper. The other day little G—— was about to suffer the extreme penalty of the domestic law for flagrant disobedience, and he remarked drily to the reluctant executioner, "You had better take care, *I am very dusty*." It was quite true, for the slipper elicited such clouds of dust from the little blue serge suit that the chastisement had to be curtailed, much to the culprit's satisfaction. As for the baby, he was discovered the other day taking a dust bath exactly like the chickens, and considered it very hard to be stopped in his amusement.

Every now and then we have a dust-storm. There have been two this month already, perfect hurricanes of cold wind driving the dust in solid sheets before them. Nearer the coast these storms have been followed by welcome showers, but here we are still dry and parched. The only water supply we (individually speaking) have, is brought in buckets from the river about half-a-mile off, and one has to wash in it and drink it with closed eyes on account of its colour and consistency. But it cannot be unwholesome, thank Heaven! for most of us drink nothing else and yet are very well. I owe it a grudge, however, on account of its extraordinary hardness. Not only

does it spoil the flavour of my beloved tea, but it chaps our skins frightfully; and what with the dust in the pores, and the chronic irritation caused by some strange peculiarity in the climate, we are all like nutmeg-graters, and one can understand the common-sense of a Kafir's toilette into which grease enters largely. Yet in spite of dust and dryness, for everything is ludicrously dry, — sugar and salt are so many solid cakes, not to be dealt with by means of a spoon at all,—one is thankful for the cold bracing weather, and unless there is a necessity for confronting the dust, we contrive to enjoy many of the pleasant sunshiny hours in the verandah, and I rejoice to see the roses blooming again in the children's cheeks. Every evening we have a wood fire on the open hearth in the drawing-room, and there have been sharp frosts lately. The waving tips of the poor bamboos look sadly yellow, but I have two fine flourishing young camellias out of doors without shelter of any sort, and my supply of roses has never failed from those trees which get regularly watered. The foliage, too, of the geraniums is as luxuriant as ever, though each leaf is white with dust, but the first shower will make them lovely once more.

I was seized with a sudden wish the other day to see the market here, and accordingly got my household up *very* early one of these cold mornings, hurried breakfast over, and drove down to the market square exactly at 9 A.M., when the sales commence. Every thing is sold by auction, but sold with a rapidity which

seemed magical to me. I saw some fine potatoes a dozen yards away from where the market-master was selling, with lightning speed, waggon load after waggon load of fresh green forage. I certainly heard "Two and a half-penny," or "And three pence," and "Thank you: gone," coming rather near, and I had gone so far in my own mind as to determine which of my friends—for heaps of people I knew were there—I should ask to manage it for me. But the bidding swept over my potatoes like a wave. I quite looked upon them as mine, and they were gone. So as I did not want any firewood, and there were only about a dozen huge waggons piled high up with lopped branches and limbs of trees; and as I had begun to perceive that a dozen waggon loads were nothing to the rapid utterance of the market-master, I went into the market-hall to look at the fruit and vegetables, eggs and butter, with which the tables were fairly well covered. There was very little poultry, and a pair of ducks, towards which I felt somewhat attracted, sold for 6*s.* 6*d.* each, directly the bidding began. So I consoled myself by purchasing, still in a vicarious manner by means of a friend, three turkeys. *Such* a bargain! The only cheap things I have seen in Natal — only 9*s.* 9*d.* apiece; beautiful full grown turkeys,—two hens and a cock—just what I wanted. Of course everybody clustered round me and began to damp my joy directly, by pouring statistics into my ears of the mortality among turkey chicks, and the certain ill-fortune which would attend my efforts

to rear them. But it is too early in the season yet for such anxieties, so I am free for the next two months to admire my turkeys as much as I choose, without breaking my heart over the untimely fate of their offspring. Yes, those turkeys were the only cheap things: butter sold easily at 3*s.* 9*d.* a pound (it is 6*s.* 6*d.* lower down along the coast), eggs at 3*s.* a dozen, and potatoes and other vegetables at pretty nearly Covent Garden prices.

It gave one a good idea of the chronic state of famishment even so little a town as this was in, to see the clean sweep made of every single thing, live and dead, always excepting my turkeys, in ten minutes after the market-master entered the building. I am sure treble the quantity would have been snapped up as quickly, such odd miscellaneous things, bacon, cheese, honey, pumpkins, all jumbled together. Then, outside for a few moments, to finish up with, a few wheelbarrow loads of young barley, a basket or two of mealies, and some faggots of fire-wood, brought in by the Kafirs, and lo, in something less than an hour it is all over, and hungry Maritzburg has swallowed up all she can get for to-day. The market-master is now at liberty—after explaining to a Kafir or two that it is not, strictly speaking, right, to sell your wheel-barrow load twice over, once privately, and once publicly—to show me the Market Hall; a very creditable building, large and commodious, well roofed and lighted. Knowing as I do the exceeding slowness of building operations in Maritzburg, it struck me as

little less than marvellous to hear that it had actually been run up in twenty-one days. No lesser pressure than Prince Alfred's visit, nearly fifteen years ago, could have induced such Aladdin-like rapidity; but the loyal Maritzburgians wanted to give their Sailor Prince a ball, and there was no room in the whole town capable of holding one quarter of the people who wanted to see the Royal midshipman: so Kafirs and whites, and men of all colours fell to work with a will, and hammered night and day until all was finished, extempore chandeliers of painted hoops dangling in all directions, flowers and flags hiding the rough and ready walls, and the "lion and the unicorn fighting for the crown" in orthodox fashion over the door-way, where it remains to this day. The only thing I wonder at is whether the floor was at all more even then than now, for at present it is nearly as much up and down as the waves of the restless Indian Ocean.

Now, too, that there are no more domestic purchases to be made, I can look about and see how quaint and picturesque it all is. In summer the effect must really be charming, with the double bordering of acacia trees, fresh and green, instead of leafless and dusty,—the queer little Dutch church, with its hugely disproportionate weather-cock, glistening large and bright in the streaming sunlight,—the teams of patient bullocks moving slowly off again through the dust with waggons of forage or fire-wood, to be dropped at their various destinations, and the fast melting

heterogeneous crowd of Kafirs and Coolies, Dutch and English, some with baskets, some with dangling poultry, or carefully-carried tins of eggs. The Market Hall and its immediate vicinity is quite deserted, but the crowd seems re-assembling a little lower down, where the usual weekly auction is being held in primitive fashion out in the open air beneath the acacia trees. A stalwart Kafir wanders about listlessly ringing a large bell, and the auctioneer mounted on a table, is effecting what he calls a clearance sale, apparently of all the old rubbish in the place: chiefly condemned military stores, tents and great-coats. There are pianos also, from which the very ghost of tune has fled years ago, cracked china, broken chairs, crinolines, fiddles, kettles, faded pictures under fly-blown glasses, empty bottles, old baskets, all are "Going, going: gone!" whilst we stand there—drifting away to other homes all over the place.

I pass every day an ingenious though lowly family mansion made solely and entirely from the sheets of zinc out of boxes, fastened together in some strange fashion. Roof, walls, flooring, all are of it. There is neither door nor window facing the road, so I don't know how you get in and out of the dwelling; but I can imagine how that hovel must crackle in a high wind. What mysterious law of gravitation keeps it down to the ground I have failed to discover, nor can I make out how the walls are supported even in their leaning position. Well, I saw the owner of this cot, a Coolie, buying furniture at the auction, and he was very near

purchasing the piano under the impression it was a folding-up bedstead. I have always taken such an interest in the zinc dwelling that it was with difficulty I could refrain from giving my opinion about its furniture.

But the sun is getting high, for it is ten o'clock and past, quite time for all housewives to be at home and the men at their business, so the clearance sale ends like a transformation scene. Kafirs hoist up ponderous burthens on their heads and walk off unconcernedly with them, and the odds and ends of what were once household gods disappear round the corner. My early rising makes me feel as dissipated as if I had been at a wedding, and I feel very reluctant to go back to the daily routine of G——'s lessons and baby's pinafores: it seems so delightful to idle about in the sunshine, in spite of the dust. What is there to do, or to see? What excuse can any one find to prevent my going home just yet? It is an anxious thought, for there is nothing to do and nothing to see beyond waggons and oxen in the length and breadth of Maritzburg. Some one fortunately recollects *the* Mill,—there is only one in the whole place,—and avers that wool-scouring is going on there at the present time. At all events it is a pleasant drive, and in five minutes we are trotting along, raising a fine cloud of dust on the road which leads to the park. When the river-side has been reached, poor shrunken Umsindusi, it is a mere rivulet now, and thoroughly contracted and

depressed, we turn off and follow the windings of the banks for a few hundred yards till we come to where the mill-wheel catches and makes use of a tiny streamlet just as it is entering the river.

It is a very picturesque spot, although the immediate country around is flat and uninteresting; but there is such a profusion of willow trees, such beautiful tufts of tall willow-ferns, such clumps of grasses, that the old brick buildings are hidden and shaded by all manner of waving branches. Then in front is the inevitable waggon, the long straggling span of meagre oxen, with their tiny black fore-looper and attendant Kafirs. This is indeed beginning at the end of the story, for into the waggon big neat bales, all ready for shipment, bales which have been "dumped" and branded, are being lowered by a crane out of a large upper store. Very different do those bales look as they now depart from those in which the wool arrives. With the characteristic untidiness and make-shift fashion of the whole country, the wool is generally stuffed loosely and carelessly into inferior bales, which become ragged and filthy by the time they reach Maritzburg, and are a discredit to the place as they pass along the streets. That is the state in which it is brought here and delivered over to the care of the wool scourers. The first step is to sort it all, sift the coarsest dirt out of it, and then away it goes, first into its hot bath of soda and water, and afterwards into many succeeding "tubs" of cooler water, until at last it emerges, dripping indeed, but cleansed from burr and

seed, and white as the driven snow, to be next laid out on a terrace sheltered from dust and wind, and dried rapidly under the burning South African sun. Then there is the steam-press which squeezes it tightly into these neat trim bales, and a hydraulic machine which gives it that "one turn more of the screw" which was supposed to constitute the difference between neuralgia and gout, but which here marks the difference between a "dumped" and undumped bale. The iron bands are rivetted with a resounding clang, or thud, the letters are rapidly brushed in over their iron plate, and the bale is pronounced finished.

A very creditable piece of work it is; neat and tidy outside, and fair and honest inside. I heard none of the usual excuses for dirt and untidiness: "Oh, one can't get the Kafirs to do anything." There was a sufficiency of Kafirs at work under the eyes of the masters, but there was no ill-temper nor rough language; all was methodical and business-like, every detail seen to and carried thoroughly out from first to last, and the result something to be proud of. The machinery combed and raked and dipped with monotonous patience, and many an ingenious connecting rod or band saved labour and time. I declare it was the most encouraging and satisfactory thing I have seen since I came, apart from the real pleasure of looking at a bale of wool turned out as it used to be from every wool-shed in New Zealand, instead of the untidy bundles one sees slowly travelling down to Durban, not even well packed in the

waggons. Apart from this it is inspiriting to see the resources of the place made the best of, and everything kept up to the mark of a high standard of excellence. There were no incomplete or make-shift contrivances, and the two bright, active young masters going about and seeing to everything themselves, as colonists ought to do, were such a contrast to the ordinary-looking, unkempt, pale-faced overseer of half-a-dozen creeping Kafirs, which represents the labour market here.

I feel, however, as if I were rather "loafing" myself, and am certainly very idle, for it is past mid-day before G—— has half enough examined the establishment, or tumbled often enough in and out of the wool press; but we leave at last the cool shade of the willows and the mesmeric throb of the mill-wheel, and drive home through the dust once more to our own little house on the hill.

Ever since I began this letter I have been wanting to tell you of an absurd visitor I had the other day, and my poor little story has very nearly been crowded out by other things.

A couple of mornings ago I was very busy making a new cotton skirt for "Malia," for I am her sole dressmaker, and she keeps me at work always, what with growing into a stout grenadier of a girl, and what with rending these skirts upon all occasions. Well, I was getting over the seams at a fine rate in the sewing machine, which I had moved out into the verandah for light and warmth, when I became

"ware" of a shadow between me and the sun. It was a very little shadow, and the substance of it was the tiniest old Dutchman you ever saw in your life. I assure you my first idea was that I must be looking at a little goblin, he was so precisely like the pictures one sees in the illustrations of a fairy tale. His long waistcoat of a gay flowered chintz, his odd, square-tailed coat and square shoes, his wide short breeches and pointed hat, were all in keeping with the goblin theory. But his face! I was too startled to laugh, but it ought to have been sketched on the spot. No apple ever was more rosy, no snake-skin ever more wrinkled; eyes as blue and keen as steel gleamed out at me from beneath enormous shaggy brows, and his nose and chin were precisely like Punch's.

I wonder what he thought of me? *My* eyes were as round as marbles, and I do believe my mouth was wide open. He gave a sort of nod, and in a strange dialect said something, to which I in my bewilderment answered "Ja," being the one single word of Dutch I know. This misleading reply encouraged my weird visitor to sit down on the steps before me, to take off his hat, mop his thin, long, grey locks, and to launch forth with much pantomime into a long story, of which I did not understand one word, for the simple reason that it was all literally in High Dutch. Here was a pretty predicament—alone with a goblin to whom I had just told a flat falsehood, for evidently his first inquiry, of which I only caught the word "Hollands," and which I imagined to refer to gin, must have been

a demand as to whether I understood his language; and I had said "Ja." It was dreadful. In my dismay I remembered having heard somebody say "Nie," and I even followed it up with faltering, "Stehts nie" (I don't understand), which also came to me in my extremity. This contradictory answer puzzled my old gentleman, and he looked at me frowningly, but I had always heard that courage is everything with goblins, so I smiled and said inquiringly, "Ja?" again. He shook his head reprovingly, and then by the aid of ticking off each word upon his fingers and stopping at it until he thought I understood, he contrived by means of German, and English, and Kafir, only breaking out into Dutch at very interesting parts, to tell me that he was in search of a little black ox. I must clearly understand that it was "schwartz," and also that the "pfennings" it had cost were many. The ox seems to have been a regular demon, if his story was anything like true. No rest had he had. (Here a pantomime of going to sleep.) From Over Berg had he come, and he had bought this wayward beast from one Herr Schmidst, an Inkosi. A great deal of shaking of the head here, which must have meant that this Herr Inkosi had cheated him; yet I longed to ask how one could get the better of a goblin? I didn't know it was to be done. From the moment the "klein schwartz" ox changed masters my small friend's troubles began. "Früh in de morgen" did that ox get away every day; in vain was it put in kraals at night, in vain did Kafirs search

for it (great acting here of following up a spoor)—it was over the Berg and far away. He had been "drei tags mit nodings to eat ab mealies." It was a long story, but the refrain was always, "Vere hat dat leetel ox, dat schwartzen ox, got to?" If I am to say the exact truth he once demanded, "Vere das Teufels dat leetel ox hat be?" but I looked so shocked that he took off his steeple-crowned hat deprecatingly.

"Sprechen Sie Kafir?" I asked in despair; but it was no better. His countenance brightened, and he went through it all again in Kafir, and the "Inkomo" was quite as prominent as the ox had been. Of course *I* meant that he should speak to some of my Kafirs about it, if he knew their language. I believe we should have been there to this day talking gibberish to each other if little G—— had not appeared suddenly round the corner and taken the matter into his own hands.

"Why, what a queer old man that is, Mumsy! Wherever *did* you find him, and what *does* he want?" G—— demands, with true colonial brevity.

"I *think* he is looking for a little black ox," I say guardedly.

"Ja wohl—dat is it: ein leetel black ox, my tear"—(I trust he meant G——).

"Oh, all right!" G—— shouts, springing up. "Osa (come), old gentleman! There's rather a jolly little black bullock over there, I know, because I've been with Jack there looking for a snake."

The goblin was on his feet in a moment, with every wrinkle on the alert. "Danks, my tear umfan: du air ein gut leetel boy. Früh in the morgen," and so on with the whole story over again, to G——, who understood him much better than I did, and gave me quite a minute account of the "leetel black ox's" adventures.

The last thing G—— saw of it it was taking the fence like a springbok, with the goblin and three Kafirs in full chase after it.

LETTER XIII.

REGULARS AND VOLUNTEERS.

MARITZBURG, *August* 1.

THE brief winter-season seems already ended and over, so far as the crisp bracing atmosphere is concerned. For many days past it has been not only very hot in the sun, but a light hot air has brooded over everything: not strong enough to be called a hot wind, it is yet like the quivering haze out of a furnace mouth. I pity the poor trees: it is hard upon them. Not a drop of rain has fallen for three months to refresh their dried-up leaves and thirsting roots; and now the sun beats down with a fiercer fire than ever, and draws up the drops of moisture which haply may linger low down in the cool earth.

Cool earth did I say? I fear that is a figure of speech. It almost burns one's feet through the soles of thin boots, and each particle of dust is like a tiny cinder. I think regretfully of the pleasant sharp frosty mornings and evenings, even though the days

are lengthening, and one may now count by weeks the time before the rain will come, and fruits and vegetables, milk and butter be once more obtainable with comparative ease. What I most long for, however, is a good pelting shower, a down-pour which will fill the tanks and make water plentiful. I am always rushing out in the sun to see that the horses, the fowls, and all the animals have enough water to drink. In spite of my care they all seem in a chronic state of thirst, for the Kafirs are too lazy and careless to think that it matters if tubs get empty, or if a horse comes home too late to be led down to the river with the rest. The water that I drink myself—and I drink nothing else—would give a sanitary inspector a fit to look at, even after it has passed through two filters. But it goes through many vicissitudes before it reaches this comparatively clean stage. It is brought from the river (which is barely able to move sluggishly over its ironstone bed) through clouds of dust. If the Kafir rests his pails for a moment outside before pouring their contents into the first large filter, the pony, who is always on the look-out for a chance, plunges his muzzle in among the green boughs with snorts of satisfaction; the pigeons fly in circles round the man's head, trying to take advantage of the first favourable moment for a bath; and not only dogs, but cats even press up for a drop. This is because it is cool and not so dusty as that in pans outside. There is not a leaf anywhere large enough to give shade yet, and the water outside soon becomes loath-

somely hot. Of course it is an exceptionally dry season. All the weather and all the seasons I have ever met with in the course of my life have always been quite out of the ordinary routine.

After these last few amiable lines it will hardly surprise any one to hear that this is the irritating hot wind which is blowing so lightly. You must know we have hot winds from nearly opposite quarters. There is one from the north-east, which comes down from Delagoa Bay and all the fever-haunted region thereabouts, which is more unhealthy than this. *That* furnace-breath makes you languid and depressed,—exertion is almost an impossibility, thought is an effort. But *this* light air represents the healthy hot wind: a nice rasping zephyr,—a wind which dries you up like a Normandy pippin, and and keeps you in the most peevish, discontented frame of mind. It has swept over the burning deserts of the interior, and comes from the north-west, and I can only say there is aggravation in every puff of it.

The only person towards whom I feel at all kindly disposed when this wind is blowing is Jim. Jim is a new Kafir lad, Tom's successor, for Tom's battles with Charley became rather too frequent to be borne in a quiet household. Jim is such a nice boy, and Jim's English is delightful. He began by impressing upon me, through Maria, that he had "no Inglis," but added immediately, "Jim no sheeky." Certainly he he is not "cheeky," but on the contrary the sweetest-tempered creature you could meet with anywhere. He

must be about sixteen years old, but he is over six feet high, and as straight as a willow wand. To see Jim stride along by the side of the little carriage is to be reminded of the illustrations to the Seven-League-Boots' story. At first Jim tried to coil and fold and double his long legs into the small perch at the back of the pony-carriage, but he always tumbled out at a rut in the road, and kept me in perpetual terror of his snapping himself in two. Not that there are so many ruts now in my road. I would have you know it is all solid dust, about three feet deep everywhere. A road-party worked at it on their own peculiar plan for many weeks this "fall," and the old Dutch overseer used to assure me with much pride, every time I passed, that he was making "my ladyships a boofler road, mit grabbles" Of course it was the Queen's highway at which he and his Kafirs dug, but it pleased him to regard it as my private path, and gave him greater courage to throw out "schnapps" as a suggestion worthy of my attention.

Yes, Jim's English is very droll, all the more so for his anxiety to practise it, in spite of his protestations of ignorance. Jim is a great meteorologist, unlike the majority of Kafirs, from whom you can extract no opinion whatever. They say it is not their business, the rain-doctor is the proper person to determine whether it is going to be fair or foul weather I have asked Charlie whether it was going to rain when the heavy clouds have been almost over our heads, just to hear what he would say, and Charlie

has answered with Turkish fatalism, "Oh, ma, I doan know: if he like to rain he will, but if he don't, he won't." Now Jim does proffer an opinion, expressed by a good deal of pantomime, and Jim is quite as often right as most weather-prophets. Jim studies the skies on account of getting and keeping his wood-heaps dry, and prides himself on his neat stacks of chopped-up fuel. I gave Jim an orange the other day, and he took it in the graceful Kafir fashion, with both hands, and burst forth into all his English at once. "Oh, danks, ma! Incosa-casa vezy kind, new face, vezy. Jim no sheeky. O yaas! all lite!" His meaning can only darkly be guessed at, especially about the new face. I wish with all my heart I *could* get a new face, for this one is much the worse for the South African sun, and suffers also from my inveterate habit of loitering about out of doors whenever I can, and spending most of my waking hours in the verandah.

August 10.

Every now and then, when I give way to temper and a hot wind combined, and write crossly about the climate, my conscience reproaches me severely with a want of fairness when the weather changes, as it generally does directly, and we have some exquisite days and nights. For instance, directly after I last wrote, our first spring showers fell, very coyly it is true, and almost as if the clouds had forgotten how to dissolve in rain; still, the very smell of the moist

earth was delicious, and ever since that wet night the whole country has been

"Growing glorious quietly, day by day;"

and except in the very last burnt patches, a faint and hesitating tinge of palest green is stealing over all the bleak hill-sides. My poor bamboos are still mere shrivelled ghosts of the fair green plumes which used to rustle and wave all through the drenching summer weather; but everything else is pushing a leaf here and a shoot there, wherever it can; and,—joy of joys! —there has been no dust for a day or two: all looks washed and refreshed. Parched-up Nature accepts this shower as a first instalment of the deluge which is coming presently.

I took advantage of the first of these new spring days, with their cool air, to make a little expedition I have long had on my mind. From my verandah, I can see on the opposite hills, at about my own lofty elevation of fifty feet or so, the white tents beyond the dark walls of Fort Napier. Now this little spot represents the only shelter and safety in all the country side, in case of a "difficulty" with our swarming dusky neighbours. Here and there, at other townships, there are "laagers" or loopholed enclosures, within which waggons can be dragged, and a stand made against a sudden Kafir raid; but here, at the seat of government, there is a battalion of an English regiment, a thousand strong, and a regular orthodox fortified place,

with some heavy pieces of ordnance. But you know of old how terribly candid I am, so I must confess at once that it was not with the smallest idea of ascertaining for myself the military strength and capability of Fort Napier that I paid it a visit that fine spring morning. No: my object was of the purest domestic character, and indeed was only to see with my own eyes what these new Kafir huts were like, with a view to borrowing the idea for a spare room up here. Could anything be more peaceful than such a project? I felt like the old wife in Jean Ingelow's "Brides of Enderby," as I drove slowly up the steep hill, at the brow of which I could already see the pacing sentries and the grim cannon's mouth :—

> "And why should this thing be?
> What danger lowers by land or sea?"

I might have answered as she did :—

> "For storms be none and pyrates flee;

for although there are skirmishes beyond our borders, we ourselves, thank God, dwell in peace and safety within them. Nothing could be more picturesque than the gleaming white points now standing sharply out, in snowy vandykes, against a cobalt sky, or else toned harmoniously down against a soft grey cloud; now glistening on a back-ground of green hill side, or nestling dimly in a dusky hollow. There is only barrack-room for half a regiment, and the other half,

under canvas, takes a good many tents and covers a good deal of ground. Although the soldiers have got through the winter very well, it would not be prudent to trust them to the shelter of a tent during the coming summer months of alternate flood and sunshine; so Kafirs have been busy building nearly a hundred of their huts, on an improved plan, all this dry weather; and these little dwellings are now just ready for their complement of five men apiece. They are a great step in advance of the original Kafir hut; and it was for this reason I came to see them,—lured also by hearing they only cost 4*l.* a-piece.

We are so terribly cramped for room up here, and have only been able to afford to build one tiny additional dressing-room, about as big as the cabin of a ship, which cost nearly 80*l.*, in stone, to match the rest of the house; so I have had it on my mind for some time that it would be a very fine thing to put up one of these glorified Kafir huts close to the house, for a spare room. The real Kafir hut is exactly like a beehive, without door or window, and only a small hole to creep in and out at. These new military huts have circular walls, five feet high, and about a dozen feet in diameter, made of closely woven wattles, and covered within and without with clay. I stood watching the Kafirs working at one for some time. It certainly looked a rude and simple process. Some four or five stalwart Kafirs were squatting on the ground hard by, "snuffing" and conversing with much gesticulation and merriment: they were the off gang,

I imagine. Three or four more were tranquilly, and in a leisurely fashion, trampling the wet clay, and dabbing it on with their hands, inside and outside. They had not the ghost of a tool of any sort, and yet the result was wonderfully good. I wondered why finely-chopped grass was not used with the clay, as I have seen the New Zealand shepherds do in preparing the "cob" for their mud walls; but I was told that the Kafir would greatly object to anything so uncomfortable for his bare legs and feet: of course the shepherd works up his ugly mass with a spade, whilst here these men slowly trample it to the right consistency. The plastering is really a triumph of, literally, handiwork, though the process is exasperatingly slow. At first, the mud comes out all over thumb marks, and dries so; but in a day or two, buckets of water are dashed over it, so as to re-moisten it; and then it is once more patiently smoothed all over by the palm of the hand, until an absolutely even surface is obtained as flat and flawless as though the best of trowels had been used. A neatly fitting door and window has, meantime, been made in the regimental workshops, and hung in the space left for it in the wattle walls: more withes, closely woven together, are put on in the shape of a very irregular dome; and this is thatched nearly a foot deep, with long rank grass tied securely down by endless ropes of finely plaited grass. The result is a spacious, cool, and most comfortable circular room; and those which were finished and fitted up with shelves and camp

furniture, looked as nice as possible. A little tuft of straw at the apex of each dome, is at once a lightning conductor and a finish to the quaint little building. The plastered walls of some huts are whitewashed, but the most popular idea seems to be to tar them, to make them still more weather-proof. A crooked stick or two, merely the rough branch of a tree, stands in the centre, and acts as a musket rack and tent-pole to the little dwelling. The Kafirs get only 1*l.* 10s. for each hut, and the wooden fittings are calculated to cost about 2*l.* 10s. more: but I hear the Kafirs grumble a good deal, on account of the distance from which they have to bring the grass, all in the neighbourhood having been burnt. They also regard it as women's work, for all the kraals are built by women.

On the whole I was more than ever taken with the idea of a Kafir spare room, and quite hope to carry it out some day: they looked so cool, and clean, and healthy if only they will keep out the rain. The thatch and mud-walls will keep off the sun in the hot weather before us, and as all the huts stand on a gentle slope there is no fear of their being damp. It is wonderful how well the soldiers have managed hitherto under canvas, and how healthy they have been, but I can quite understand that it is not well to presume upon such good luck during another wet season. As we *were* up in camp we looked at all the soldiers' arrangements: the canteen, where mustard and pickles seemed to be the most popular articles of food; the

school-house, a mere brick-building in which both the children and the recruits have to learn, and which is also used as a chapel on Sunday. Everything was the pink of neatness and cleanliness, as is always the case where soldiers or sailors live; and I was much struck by the absolute silence and repose of so small an enclosure with a thousand men inside it. I *wonder* whether a thousand women could have kept so quiet!

Of course I peeped into the kitchen, and instantly coveted the beautiful brick oven out of which sundry smoking platters were being drawn. But curry and rice was the chief dish in the bill of fare for that day, and I can only say the smell was excellent, and exceedingly appetising. The view all round, too, was charming. Just at our feet lay the hollow where the men's gardens are. Such potatoes and pumpkins; such cabbages and onions! The men delight in cultivating the willing soil, in which all vegetables grow so luxuriantly and so easily, and it is so managed that it shall be a profit as well as a pleasure to them. In many ways this encouragement of a taste for gardening is good; there is the first consideration of the advantage to themselves, and it is indirectly a boon to us, for if a thousand men were added to the consumers of the few potatoes and vegetables which daily find their way into the Maritzburg market, I know not what would become of us. Our last stroll was to the brow of another down close by, also crowned with white tents; beneath it lay the military grave-yard,

and I have seldom seen anything much more poetic and touching than the effect of this lovely garden,—for so it looked,—a spot of purest green, tenderly cared for amid the bare winter colouring of all the country side. The hills enfolded it softly, as though it were a precious place, the sun lay brightly on it, and the quiet sleeping-ground was made orderly and tranquil by many a sheltering tree and blooming shrub. I promised myself to come in summer and look down on it again when all the wealth of roses and geraniums are out, and when these brown hill sides are green and glorious with tropic pasture.

You will think I have indeed taken a sudden mania for soldiers and camps when I tell you that a very few days after my visit to Fort Napier I joyfully accepted the offer of a friend to take me to see the annual joint encampment of the Natal Carbineers, and Durban Mounted Rifles, out on Botha's Flat, rather more than half-way between this and Durban. Not only was I delighted at the chance of seeing that lovely bit of country more at my leisure than dashing through it in the post-cart, but I have always so much admired the pluck and spirit of this handful of volunteers, who keep up the discipline and prestige of their little corps in the teeth of all sorts of difficulties and discouragements, that I was glad to avail myself of the opportunity of paying them a visit when they were out in camp. For many years past these smart Light Horse have struggled on, in spite of obstacles to attending drill: want of money, lack of public

attention and interest, and a thousand other lets and hindrances.

Living as we do in such a chronically precarious position, a position in which five minutes' official ill-temper or ever so trifling an injudicious action, might set the whole Kafir population in a blaze of discontent and even revolt, too much importance cannot, in my poor judgment, be attached to the Volunteer movement; and it seems to me worthy in the highest degree of every encouragement and token of appreciation which it is in our power to give. Of either pence or praise these Natal Mounted Volunteers (for they would be very little use on foot over such an extent of railway-less country) have hitherto had a very small share, and yet I found the pretty little camp as full of military enthusiasm, as orderly, as severely simple in its internal economy, as though the eyes of all Europe were upon it. Each man there in sacrificing his time was giving up a good deal more than most volunteers give up, and it would make too long a story if I were to enter into particulars of the actual pecuniary loss which, in this country, attends the lawyer leaving his office, the clerk his desk, the merchant his counting-house, and providing himself with horses, &c., to come out here twice a year and drill pretty nearly from morning till night. The real difficulty, I fancy, lies in subordinates being able to obtain leave. Every sugar estate, every office, every warehouse, has so few white men employed in it, lives in such a chronic state of short-handedness, that it is

the greatest inconvenience to the masters to allow their clerks to go out. Both corps are therefore stronger on paper than in the field, but from no lack of willingness to serve on the part of the volunteers themselves.

I don't want to be spiteful or invidious, but I *have* seen volunteer camps nearer the heart of civilisation where there were flower gardens round the tents, and lovely "fixings" inside; portable couches and chairs, albums and clocks, besides a French cook, and iced champagne flowing like a river. Dismiss from your minds all idea of that sort if you come with me next year to Botha's Flat. I can promise you scrupulous and exquisite neatness and cleanliness, but in every other respect you might as well be in a real camp on active service. Even the Kafir servants are left behind; the men,—some of them are very fine gentlemen indeed,—cleaning their own horses and accoutrements, pitching their own tents, cooking their own food, and in fact acting precisely as though they had really taken the field in an enemy's country. The actual drill, therefore, though more than half the hours of daylight are spent in the saddle, under the instruction of one of the most enthusiastic and competent drill-instructors you could find anywhere, is by no means all that is practised in these brief hardly-won camp days. The men learn to rely solely on their own resources. Their commissariat is arranged by themselves; one single small waggon to each corps conveying tents, stores, forage, firewood, all that is

needed for man and horse for ten days or so. They have no "base of operations," nothing and nobody to depend upon but themselves. It was literally a "flying camp," and all the more interesting for being so precisely what we should most need in case of any native difficulty. I don't suppose they ever dreamed of visitors, for in this languid land few people would journey thirty miles to look at anything, especially in a hot wind, nor am I sure the volunteers want visitors. It is real, earnest, practical hard work with them, done with their utmost diligence, and without expecting the smallest reward even in fair words. It struck me as very remarkable, and characteristic of the lack of general interest in public subjects in this country, how little one hears of the very men on whom we may at any moment be only too glad to rely. However, I never can attempt to fathom causes; rather let me describe, as best I may, effects for you.

And a very pretty effect the camp had, as we dashed round the shoulder of a steep Hill with the break hard down, the leaders plunging wildly along with slack traces, and a general appearance of an impending upset over everything. It had been a lovely drive, though rather hot, but the roads were ever so much better than they had been in summer, and I had never seen the country looking more beautiful, as it seemed to grow greener with every mile out of Maritzburg. When the hills open out suddenly and show the great fertile cleft of undulating downs, green ravines with trickling silver threads down them,

and purple mountains beyond, stretching away to the coast, which is known as the Inanda Location, one feels as if one were looking at the Happy Valley,

> "O mortal man, who livest here by toil,
> Do not complain of this, thy hard estate;"

for neither the imaginary kingdom in Amhara nor any other kingdom in all the fair earth could show a more poetical or suggestive glimpse of scenic beauty.

Yet, when a few miles more of rushing and galloping through the soft air brought us to the top of the Pass of the Inchanga, I made up my mind that *that* was the most beautiful stretch of country my eyes had ever beheld. It is too grand to describe, too complete to break up into fragments by words. Far down among the sylvan slopes of the park-like foreground, the Umgeni winds with the sunshine glinting here and there on its waters; beyond are bold, level mountains with rich deep indigo shadows and lofty crests, cut off level against the dappled sky, according to the South African formation. But we soon climb the high saddle and put the break hard down again for the worse descent on the road. If good driving, and skill, and care, can save us, we need not be nervous, for we have all these; but the state of the harness fills me with apprehension, and it is little short of a miracle why it does not all give way at once, and tumble off the horses' backs. Luckily there is very little of it to begin with, and the original leather is largely supplemented by reims, or strips of dried

bullock hide; so we hold together until the vehicle draws up at the door of a neat little way-side inn, where we get out and begin at once to rub our elbows tenderly, for they are all black and blue.

There is the camp, however, on yonder green down, and here are two of the officers from it waiting for us, and wanting to know all about hours and plans, and so forth. A little rest, and luncheon are first on the programme, and a good deal of soap and water also, for us travellers; and then,—the afternoon being still young,—we mount our horses and canter up the rising ground to where the flagstaff stands. The men are just falling in for their third and last drill that day, which will last till sundown, so there is time to go round the pretty little spot and admire the precision and neatness, the serviceable, business-like air of everything. There is the path the sentries tread, already worn perfectly bare, but as straight as though it had been ruled; yonder is the bit of sod fencing thrown up as a shelter to the kettles and frying pans. The kitchen range consists of half a dozen forked sticks to leeward of this rude shelter, and each troop contributes a volunteer cook and commissariat officer. The picket ropes for the horses run down the centre of the little camp; and we must stop a moment to admire the neatness of the piles of blankets and nose-bags marked with separate initials. The officers' tents are at one end, and the guard tents at the other, and those for the privates, holding five men each, are between. It is all as sweet and clean and tidy as possible, and one

can easily understand how good the change from town must be. The camp joke is, that the first night under canvas no one could sleep for his own and his neighbour's cough, but now there is not such a sound to be heard.

We are coming back into camp presently, for I am invited to dine at the officers' mess to-night, so we must make the most of the daylight. It is a grey evening, and the hot wind has died away, allowing the freshness from the hills to steal down to this green spur, which is yet high enough to be out of the cold mists of the valley. The drill is not very amusing for a lady this afternoon, because it is real hard work, —patiently doing the same thing over and over again until each little point is perfect; until the horses are steady and the men move with the ease and precision of a machine. But it is just because there is little else to distract one's attention that I can notice what fine stalwart young fellows they all are, and how thoroughly in earnest. Their uniforms and accoutrements are simple but natty, and clean as a new pin; the horses especially being ever so much better groomed and turned out by their masters' hands than if each had been saddled by his usual Kafir groom. So, after a short while of watching the little squadron patiently wheel and trot and advance by those mysterious "fours," manœuvre across a swamp, charge down a hill, skirmish up that burnt slope over there, and so forth, we left them hard at work, and cantered over some ridges to see what lay beyond. But there was

nothing much to reward us, and the only effect of our long evening's ride was to make us all ravenously hungry and anxious for six o'clock and dinner.

Long before that hour the dusk had crept down, and by the time we had returned and I had exchanged my riding habit for a splendid (!) dinner costume of ticking, it was dark and cold enough to make us glad of all the extra wraps one could find, and of the light and shelter of the snug little tent. Here again it is real camp fare. I am given *the* great luxury of the encampment to sit upon,—a delicious "Karosse" or rug of dressed goat-skins. It is snowy white, and soft and flexible as a glove on the wrong side; on the right it is covered with long wavy cream-coloured hair, with black patches at each corner. The ground is strewn with grass dry and sweet as hay, two carriage candles are tied by wire to a cross-stick fastened on the tent-pole, the table-cloth is a piece of canvas, the dishes are "billies," but the food is excellent, and to my great joy we have tea as the sole beverage for everybody. We are all provided with the best of sauces, and I assure you we very soon found ourselves at our dessert of oranges served in a basket-lid. Never did any of us enjoy a meal more, and certainly everybody except myself had earned it.

Then there is a little tinkling and tuning-up outside, and the band turns out to play to us. By this time the wind has got up again from another point, and is so bitterly bleak and cold that the musicians cannot possibly stand still, but have to keep marching round

and round the little tent playing away lustily and singing with a good courage. Every now and then a stumble over a tent-peg jerks out a laugh instead of a note, but still there is plenty of "go" and *verve* in the music, and half the camp turns out to join in the chorus of "Sherman's March through Georgia." We all declare loudly that we are going to carry "the flag that makes us free" through all sorts of places, especially "from Atlanta to the sea," and I am quite sure that Sherman's own "dashing Yankee boys" could not possibly have made more noise themselves. This was followed by the softest and sweetest of sentimental songs, given in a beautiful falsetto which would have been a treasure to a chorister. It was really too cold for sentiment, so we had one more comic song, and then the band sang "Auld Lang Syne" with great spirit, and as the wind was now rising to a hurricane the musical performances were wound up somewhat hurriedly by "God save the Queen." For this the whole camp turned out of their own accord. The cooks left their fires, the fatigue party their scrubbing, the lazy ones their pipes. Under the clear star-light, with the Southern Cross sloping up from the edge of yonder dusky hill, with the keen wind sweeping round the camp of this little handful of Englishmen in a strange and distant country, the words of the most beautiful tune in the world came ringing straight from each man's heart. Of course we all came out of our tent, to stand bare-headed too, and I assure you it was a very impressive

and beautiful moment. One felt as one stood there, amid the flower of the young colonists, each man holding his cap aloft in his strong right hand, each man putting all the fervour and passion of his loyal love and reverence for his Queen into every tone of his voice, that it was well worth coming down from Maritzburg for that moment alone. It is very delightful to see the English people, whether in units or tens of thousands, greet their sovereign face to face; but there is something even more heart-stirring, more inexpressibly pathetic in such outbursts as this, evoked by none of the glamour and glitter of a royal pageant, but called into being merely by a name, a tune, a sentiment. I often think if I were a Queen I should be more really gratified and touched by the ardent and loyal love of such handfuls of my subjects in out-of-the-way corners of my empire, where the sentiment has nothing from outside to fan it, than with the acclamations of a shouting multitude as my splendour passed them by. At all events *I* never saw soldiers or sailors, regulars or volunteers, more enthusiastic over our own anthem. It was followed by cheer upon cheer, blessing upon blessing, on the beloved and royal name, until everybody was perfectly hoarse from shouting in such a high wind, and we all retreated into the tiny tent for a cup of coffee and,—and what do you think? stories. I am worse than any child in my love of stories, and we had one or two really good *raconteurs* in the little knot of hosts.

Of course one of the first inquiries I made was

whether any snakes had been found in the tents, and I heard, much to my disappointment,—because the mere fact would not at all lend itself to a story for G—— when I got home,—that only one little one had crept beneath a folded great coat (which is the camp pillow, it seems), and been found in the morning curled up, torpidly dozing in the woollen warmth. No: it was not a story G—— would ever care about, for the poor little snake had not even been killed ; it was too small and too insignificant, they said, and it merely got kicked out of its comfortable bed. To console me for this bald and incomplete adventure, I was told some more snake stories. Here is one for you, which especially delighted me.

Hard by this very camp a keen sportsman was lately pursuing a buck. He had no dogs except a pet Skye terrier to help in the chase, nothing but his pony and rifle and a trusty Kafir, yet the hard-pressed buck had to dash into a small solitary patch of thorny scrub for shelter and a moment's rest. In an instant the hunter was off his pony, and had sent the Kafir into the bush to drive out the buck, that he might have a shot at it the moment it emerged from the cover. Instead of the expected buck, however—I must tell you the story never states what became of him—came loud cries in Kafir from the scrub, of "Oh my mother, oh my father, oh my friends and relations, I die, I die!" The master, much astonished, peeped as well as he could into the little patch of tangled briars and bushes, and there he saw his crouching

Kafir stooping motionless beneath a low branch, round which was coiled a large and venomous snake. The creature had struck at the man's head as he crept beneath, and its forked tongue had got firmly embedded in the Kafir's woolly pate. The wretched beater dared not stir an inch, he dared not even put up his hands to free himself, but there he remained, motionless and despairing, uttering those loud shrieks. His master bade him stay perfectly still, and taking close aim at the snake's body, fired and blew it in two. He then with a dexterous jerk disentangled the barbed tongue, and flung the quivering head and neck outside the bushes. Here comes the only marvellous part of the story. "How did he know it was a poisonous snake?" I asked. "Oh, well: the little dog ran up to play with the head, and the snake, or rather the half-snake, struck out at it, bit it in the paw, and it died in ten minutes."

As soon as we had finished laughing at our stories I broke up the little party, although it was only about the hour at which one sits down to dinner in London. Still there were early parades and drills, and goodness knows what, and I was very tired and sleepy with my jolting journey, and afternoon on horseback. So we all went the "grand rounds," lantern in hand, and then walked down to the little inn, where a tiny room, exactly like a wooden box, had been secured for me, the rest of the party climbing heroically up the hill again to sleep on the ground with their saddles for pillows. This was playing at soldiers with a vengeance,

was it not? However, they all looked as smart and well as possible next morning when they came to fetch me up to breakfast in camp. Then more drill —very pretty this time: a sham attack and defence— and then another delightful long ride over a different range of hills.

It was a perfect morning for exploring, grey and cool and cloudy, so different from the hot wind and scorching sun of yesterday. We could not go fast, not only from the steep up and down hill, but from the way the ground was turned up by the ant-bears. Every few yards was a deep burrow, often only a few hours old, and unless you had seen it with your own eyes, I can never make you believe or understand the extraordinary vivid colour of the newly-turned earth. During yesterday's journey I had noticed that the only wild flower yet out was a curious lily, growing on a fat bulb more than half out of the ground, and sometimes of a deep orange or of a brilliant scarlet colour. With the recollection of these blossoms fresh in my mind I noticed a patch of bright scarlet on the face of an opposite down, and thought it must of course be made by red lilies. As I was very anxious to get some bulbs for my garden, I proposed that we should ride across the ravine and dig some up. "We can come if you like," said the kindest and pleasantest of guides; "but I assure you it is only a freshly dug ant-bear's hole." Never did I find belief so difficult, and like all incredulous people I was on the point of backing up my hasty opinion by half

a dozen pairs of gloves, when the same friendly guide laughingly pointed to a hole close by, bidding me look well at it before risking my gloves. There was nothing more to be said. The freshly scratched-out earth was exactly the colour of vermilion, moist and brilliant in colour—"a ferruginous soil," some learned person said; but however that may be, I had never before seen earth such a bright colour, for it was quite different to the ordinary red clay one has seen here and in other places.

The line of country we followed that morning was extraordinarily pretty and characteristic. The distant purple hills rolled down to the gently undulating ground over which we rode. Here and there—would that it had been oftener—a pretty homestead, with its sheltering trees and surrounding patches of pale green forage, clung to the steep hill-side before us. Then as we sauntered on, the ravines would perhaps fall away at our feet to a deep gully, through which ran a steamlet among clustering scrub and bushes. In one spot the naked rock stood out straight, and bare, and bold, for fifty yards or so, as though it were the walls of a citadel, with a wealth of creeping greenery at its foot, and over its face a tiny waterfall, rushing from the hill behind, leapt down to join the brook in the gulley. We saw plenty of game, too—partridges, buck, two varieties of the bald-headed ibis, secretary birds, and most esteemed of all, a couple of paauw (I wonder *how* it is spelt?), a fine kind of bustard, which is quite as good eating as a turkey, but daily

becoming more and more scarce. There were lots of plover too, busy among the feathery ashes on the newly burned ground, and smaller birds chirruped sweetly every now and then.

It was exceedingly delightful and I enjoyed it all the more for the absence of the blazing sunshine, which, however it may light up and glorify the landscape, *beats too fiercely* on one's head to be pleasant. If only we women could bring ourselves to wear *pith* helmets, it would not be so bad, but with the present fashion of hats, which are neither shade nor shelter, a ride in the sun is pretty nearly certain to end in a bad headache. At all events *this* ride had no worse consequence than making us very hungry for a solid luncheon, our last camp meal, alas! and then there was just time to rush down the hill and clamber into the post-cart to undergo four hours of galloping and jolting through the cold spring evening air.

My last lingering look was at the white tents of the pretty camp, the smoke of its fires, and the smart line of carbineers and mounted rifles assembling to the bugle-call for another long afternoon of steady drill down in the valley, or "flat," as it is called. A picturesque and charming glimpse, the thought of which will always conjure up the recollection of some very pleasant hours, of the prettiest imaginable greeting and farewell, and hearty, genuine hospitality from all grades of the miniature encampment.

LETTER XIV.

AN EXPEDITION INTO THE BUSH.

MARITZBURG, *September* 1.

I HAVE had a great many pleasant cups of tea in my life, indoors and out of doors, but never a pleasanter cup than the one I had the other day in a waggon, or, to speak more exactly, by the side of a waggon. A waggon too upon which one looked with the deepest respect, for it had just come down from a long long journey up the country where it had been "trekking" these four months past. Trekking night and day in the territory of the Ama Swazies, through the Thorn country, over hundreds of miles of these endless billowy hills, rolling in wearying monotony day after day; but—and this "but" made up for every other shortcoming—amid hunting grounds, happier than often falls to the lot of even the South African explorer. And there were the spoils of the little campaign spread out before us. The first result, however, which struck me was the splendid health of

the travellers. Sunburned indeed they were, especially the fair young English girl-face which had smiled good bye to me from the depths of a sun-bonnet last April; but who would not risk a few shades of tan to have gone through such a novel and delightful journey! I never saw two people look so well in all my life as this adventurous couple, and it was with one voice they declared they had enjoyed every moment of the time. And what a pleasant time it must have been, rewarded as they were by splendid sport! On the fore-part of the waggon lay a goodly pile of skins and quantities of magnificent horns of all sizes, from the ponderous pair on the shaggy buffalo skulls down to taper points which might have belonged to a fairy buck, so slender, so polished, so inexpressibly graceful were they.

But the trophy of trophies was the skin of a lion, which had been shot in the earliest morning light, some twenty yards from the hunters' tent. It was a splendid skin, and the curved claws are to be made into a necklace and earrings for the sportsman's wife, who indeed deserves them for bearing her share of the dangers and discomforts of the expedition so cheerfully and bravely. It was very difficult to elicit the least hint of what the discomforts were or might have been, until at last my eager questions raked out an admission that a week of wet weather (the only one in all the four months) was tedious when cooped up under the tilt of the waggon, or that some of the places up and down which the lumbering, unwieldy

conveyance had crept had been fearful to look at and dangerous to travel, necessitating a lashing together of the wheels by iron chains as well as the use of the ordinary heavy brake. Yet there had been no upset, no casualty, no serious trouble of any sort, and I think what impressed these English travellers more than anything else was the honesty of the Kafirs. The waggon, with its stores of food and wine, of comforts and conveniences of all sorts, had been left absolutely alone by the side of a track crossed and recrossed every hour by Kafirs, and twenty miles short of the place whither the tent had been carried for greater facilities of getting at the big game. The oxen grazed twenty miles off in another direction, under no one's care in particular; the waggon had stood absolutely alone, and yet when the moment of reassembling came, every bullock was there, and nothing whatever of any description was missing from the unguarded waggon. The great attraction to the Kafirs along the line of travel had been the empty tins of preserved milk or jam; with tops and bottoms knocked out, they made the most resplendent bangles and became a violent fashion up among the Thorns.

Nor was that grand lion's skin the only one. There were quagga skins, wolf skins, buck skins of half a dozen different species, eland skins, buffalo skins, lynx and wild cat skins, enough to start a furrier's shop, and all in excellent preservation, having been tightly pegged out and thoroughly dried. The horns, or rather the skulls, were still a little "high," and needed

to be heaped well to leeward before we settled down to tea, camping on kegs and boxes and whatever we could find. I was made proud and happy by being accommodated with a seat on the lion's skin, and exactly opposite to me, tranquilly grazing on the just sprouting grass, was the identical donkey which had attracted the king of animals to the spot where his fate awaited him. Although camped in the very heart of the lion country, the hunter had neither seen nor heard anything of his big game until this donkey chanced to be added to the stud, and then the lions came roaring round, half a dozen at a time. A huge fire had to be kept up night and day, and close to this the unhappy ass was tethered, for his life would not have been worth much otherwise, and he seems to have been thoroughly alive to the dangers of his situation. Lions can resist anything except ass-flesh, it appears, but it is so entirely their favourite delicacy that they forget their cunning, and become absolutely reckless in pursuit of it. When at the last extremity of terror the poor donkey used to lift up his discordant voice, and so keep the prowling foe at bay for a while, though it invariably had the double effect of attracting all the lions within earshot. And so it was that in the early dawn the hunter, hearing the lion's growls coming nearer and nearer, and the poor donkey's brays getting more and more frequent, stole out, rifle in hand, just in time to get a steady shot at the splendid brute, only fifteen yards away, who was hungrily eying the miserable ass on the other side of the blazing fire.

In spite of all legends to the contrary, a lion never attacks a man first, and this lion turned and moved away directly he saw the sportsman's levelled rifle. Only one shot was fired, for the dull thud of the bullet told it had struck the lion, and nothing upon earth is so dangerous as a wounded lion. The huge beast walked slowly away, and when the full daylight had come, the sportsman and a few Kafirs followed up the blood-flecked trail for a quarter of a mile or less, to find the lion lying down as though asleep with his head resting on his folded fore-paw, quite dead. I don't think I ever understood the *weight* of a lion until I was told that it took two strong Kafirs to lift one of its ponderous fore-feet a few inches from the ground, and it was almost more than ten men could manage to drag it along the ground by ropes back to the tent. Twenty men could scarcely have carried it, the size and weight of the muscle is so enormous. The Kafirs prize the fat of the lion very highly, and the head man of the expedition had claimed this as his perquisite, melting it down into gourds and selling it in infinitesimal portions as an unguent. I don't know what the market price up country was, but whilst we were laughing and chattering over our tea I saw the crafty Kafir scooping out the tiniest bits of lion's fat in return for a shilling. One of my Kafirs asked leave to go down and buy some. "What for, Jack?" I asked. "Not for me, ma, *for my brudder:* make him brave, ma; able for plenty fight, ma." I am certain however that this was a *ruse*, and that

Jack felt his own need of the courage-giving ointment.

Talking of Jack reminds me of a visit I had the other day from a detachment of his friends and relatives. They did not come to see Jack, they came to see me, and very amusing visitors they were. First of all there was a bride, who brought me a young hen as a present. She was attended by two or three scraggy girls of about fifteen, draped in short mantles of coarse cloth. The bride herself was exceedingly smart, and had one of the prettiest faces imaginable. Her regular features, oval face, dazzling teeth, and charming expression were not a bit disfigured by her jet-black skin. Her hair was drawn straight up from her head like a tiara, stained red, and ornamented with a profusion of bone-skewers, a tuft of feathers being stuck coquettishly over one ear, and a band of bead embroidery, studded with brass-headed nails, worn like a fillet where the hair grew low on the forehead. She had a kilt, or series of aprons rather, of lynx skins, a sort of bodice of calf skin, and over her shoulders, arranged with ineffable grace, a gay table-cover. Then there were strings of beads on her pretty shapely throat and arms, and a bright scarlet ribbon tied tightly round each ankle. All the rest of the party seemed immensely proud of this young person, and were very anxious to put her forward in every way. Indeed all the other women, mostly hard-working, hard-featured matrons, prematurely aged, took no more part in the visit than the chorus of a

Greek play, always excepting the old Induna, or headman of the village, who came as escort, and in charge of the whole party. This was a most garrulous and amusing individual, full of reminiscences and anecdotes of his fighting days. He was rather more frank than most warriors who "shoulder their crutch and show how fields are won," for the usual end of his battle stories was the naïve confession, "and then I thought I should be killed, and so I ran away." He and I used up a great many interpreters in the course of the visit, for he wearied every one out, and nothing made him so angry as any attempt to condense his conversation in translating it to me. But he was great fun; polite as became an old soldier, full of compliments and assurances that "now the happiest day of his life having come he desired to live no longer, but was ready for death." The visit took place on the shady side of the veranda, and thither I brought a large musical-box and set it down on the ground to play. Never was there such a success. In a moment they were all down on their knees before it listening with rapt delight, the old man telling them the music was caused by very little people inside the box who were obliged to do exactly as I bade them. They were in a perfect ecstasy of delight for ever so long, retreating rapidly however to a distance whenever I wound it up. The old Induna took snuff copiously all the time, and made me affectionate speeches which resulted in the gift of an old greatcoat, which he assured me he never would live to wear out, because

he was quite in a hurry to die and go to the white man's land, now that he had seen me. We hunted up all manner of queer odds and ends for presents and made every lady happy in turn. As a final ceremony I took them through the house; tiny as it is, it filled them with amazement and delight. My long looking-glass was at once a pleasure and terror to them, for they rather feared bewitchment, but I held up the baby to see himself in it, and then they were pacified, saying, "the chieftainess never would go and bewitch that nice little chieftain." As usual the pictures were what they most thoroughly enjoyed. Landseer's prints of wild cattle elicited low cries of recognition and surprise, "zipi inkomo" (behold the cows). My own favourite print of the "three little foxes" was much commended, but pronounced to be "lill catties." The bride was anxious to know why I kept the beds of the establishment on the floor and allowed people to walk over them. She did not consider that a good arrangement, evidently, for she could not understand how matting could be of any use except to sleep on. At last it became time for "Scoff," and they all retired to partake of that dainty, the old Induna having begged leave to kiss my hands, which he did very gallantly, assuring me he had never been so happy before in all his life, and that he could quite believe now what I had told him about the great white Queen over the sea being just as careful for and fond of her black children as of her white ones. I made a great point of this in my conversations with him, and showed

them all her Majesty's picture, to which they cried "moochy" (nice) and gave the royal salute. I must say I delight in these little glimpses of Kafir character. I find in those whom I have come across, like my visitors of last week, so much simple dignity mixed with shrewd common sense. Their minds too seem peculiarly adapted to receive and profit by anything like culture and civilisation, and there certainly is a better foundation on which to build up both these good things than in any other black race with which I am acquainted.

September 15.

Such an expedition as we have just made! It reminded me exactly of the dear old New Zealand days, only that I should have been sure to have had a better horse to ride in New Zealand than I have here. Upon this occasion I was mounted on a coarsely-put-together chestnut, who was broken in to carry a lady a few evenings ago, whilst I was getting ready for my ride. However, beyond being a little fidgety and difficult to mount, owing to a lurking distrust of my habit, he had no objection to carry me. But he is as rough as a cart-horse in his paces, and the way he stops short in his canter or trot, flinging all his legs about anywhere, is enough to jolt one's spine out of the crown of one's head. As for his mouth, it might as well be a stone wall, and yet he requires to be ridden tightly on the curb to keep him from tripping. When you add to these peculiarities a

tendency to shy at every tuft of grass, and a habit of hanging the entire weight of his head on your bridle-hand as soon as he gets the least bit jaded, it must be admitted that it would be easy to find a pleasanter horse for a long, hurried journey. Still, on the principle of "all's well that ends well" I ought not to abuse my steed, for the expedition ended well and was really rather a severe tax on man and beast. This was the way we came to take it.

Ever since I arrived, now nearly a year ago, I have been hearing of a certain "bush" or forest some forty-five or fifty miles away, which is always named when I break into lamentations over the utter treelessness of the scenery of Natal. Latterly I have had even a stronger craving than usual to see something more than a small plantation of blue gums, infantine oaks or baby firs, making a dot here and there amid the eternal undulation of the low bare hills around. "Seven Mile Bush" has daily grown more attractive to my thoughts, and at last we accepted one of many kind and hospitable invitations thither, and I induced F—— to promise that he would forego the dear delight of riding down to his barn-like office for a couple of days and come with Mr. C—— and me to the "Bush." This was a great concession on his part, but I may state here, that he never ceased pining for his papers and his arm-chair from the moment we started until we came back.

It was necessary to make a very early start indeed, and the stars were still shining when we set off,

though the first sunbeams were stealing swiftly over the high eastern hills. It was a fresh morning, in spite of the occasional puff of dust-laden air. The whole country seems ground to powder, and the almost daily hot winds keep this powder incessantly moving about, so it is not exactly pleasant for travelling. We picked up our Kafir guide as we rode through the town and made the best of our way at once across the flats between this and Edendale, which we left on our right, climbing slowly and tediously up a high hill above it. Then down again, up again, constantly crossing clear, cold, bright rivulets, a welcome moment to horse and rider, for already our lips are feeling swollen and baked; across stony reefs and ridges cropping out from bare hillsides, past many a snug Kafir kraal, with its huts clinging like the beehives of a giant to the side of a steep pitch, and the long red waggon track stretching out as though for ever and ever before us. The sun is hot, very hot, but we have left the hot winds behind us in the valleys below, and we sweep along quickly wherever there is a foothold for the horses.

Still it is with feelings of profound content that at the end of a twenty-mile stage we see "Taylor's," a roadside shanty, looking like a child's toy set down on the vast flat around, but comfortable and snug inside, with mealie gardens and forage patches around, and more accommodation beneath its low thatched eaves than one would have believed possible from the first bird's-eye glance. The horses are made luxuri-

ously comfortable directly, in a roomy, cool shed, and we sit down to an impromptu breakfast in the cleanest of all inn parlours. I have no doubt it would have been a very comprehensive and well-arranged meal, but the worst of it was, it never had a chance of being taken as a whole. Whatever the nice tidy landlady put down on her snowy cloth, vanished like a conjuring trick before she had time to bring the proper thing to go with it. We ate our breakfast backwards and forwards and all sorts of ways, beginning with jam, sardines, and mustard, varied by eggs and ending with rashers of bacon. As for the tea, we had drunk up all the milk and eaten the sugar by the time the teapot arrived. The only thing which at all daunted us was some freshly-made Boers' bread, of the colour of sponge, the consistency of clay, and the weight of pig-iron. We were quite respectful to that bread, and only ventured to break off little crusts here and there and eat it guardedly, for it was a fearful condiment. Still we managed to consume an enormous breakfast in spite of it, and so did the horses, and we all started in highest condition and spirits a little before two o'clock, having had more than a couple of hours rest. After riding hard for some time, galloping over every yard of anything approaching to broken ground, we ventured to begin to question our guide—who kept up with us in an amazing manner considering the prominence of his little rough pony's ribs—as to the remaining distance between us and "Seven Mile Bush." Imagine our horror when he crooked his hand

at right angles to his wrist and made slowly and distinctly *five* separate dips with it, pointing to the horizon as he did so. Now there were five distinct and ever-rising ranges of hills before us, the fifth making a hard ridge against the dazzling sky. We had been assured at Taylor's that only twenty-five miles more lay between us and the "Bush," and those mountains must be *now* at least thirty miles off! But the guide only grins and nods his head and kicks with his bare heels against his pony's ribs, and we hasten on once more.

By four of the clock we have made such good way, that we can afford, immediately after crossing "Eland's River,"—a beautiful stream—to off-saddle, and sit down and rest by its cool banks for a quarter of an hour. Then tightening up the girths we push on once more. It has been up hill the whole way, just excepting the sudden sharp descents into a deep valley on the further side of each range, but the increasing freshness, nay sharpness of the air, proved to us how steadily we had been climbing up to a high level ever since we left Edendale. From this point of the journey the whole scenic character of the country became widely different from anything I have hitherto seen in Natal. For the first time I begin to understand what a wealth of beauty lies hidden away among her hills and valleys, and that the whole country is not made up of undulating downs, fertile flats, and distant purple hills. At the top of the very first ridge up which we climbed after crossing Eland's River a

perfectly new and enchanting landscape opened out before us, and it gained in majesty and beauty with every succeeding mile of our journey. Ah! how can I make you see it in all its grandeur of form and glory of colour? The ground is broken up abruptly in magnificent masses, cliffs, terraces, and rocky crags. The hills expand into abrupt mountain ranges, serrated in bold relief against the loveliest sky blazing with coming sunset splendours. Every cleft or "kloof," as it is called here, is filled with fragments of the giant forest which until quite lately must have clothed these rugged mountain sides. Distant hill slopes, still bare with wintry leanness, catch some slanting sun-rays on the scanty covering of queer reddish grass, and straightway glow like banks of amethyst and topaz; and behind them lie transparent deep blue shadows of which no pigment ever spread on mortal palette could give the exquisite delicacy and depth. Under our horses' feet the turf might be off the Sussex downs, so close and firm and delicious is it, the very thing for sheep, of which we only see a score here and there.

"Why are there not more sheep?" I ask indignantly, with my old squatter instincts coming back in full force upon me. Mr. C—— translates my questions to the Kafir guide, who grins and kicks his pony's ribs and says, "No can keep ship here. Plenty Kafir dog eat up all ship, two, tree day." "Yes, that is exactly the reason," Mr. C—— says, "but I wanted you to hear it from himself." And ever after

this, I, remembering the dearness and scarcity of mutton in Maritzburg, and seeing all this splendid feed growing for nothing, look with an eye of extreme disfavour and animosity on all the gaunt lean curs I see prowling about the kraals. Almost every Kafir we meet has half a dozen of these poaching-looking brutes at his heels, and it exasperates me to hear that there *is* a dog law or ordinance, or something of that sort, "only it has not come into operation yet." I wish it would come into operation to-morrow, and so does every farmer in the country, I should think. Yes, in spite of this fairest of fair scenes—and in all my gipsy-life I have never seen anything much more beautiful, I feel quite cross and "put out" to think of imaginary fat sheep being harried by these useless, hideous dogs.

But the horses are beginning to go a little wearily, and gladly pause to wet their muzzles and cool their hoofs in every brook we cross. I am free to confess that I am getting very tired, for nothing is so wearying as a sudden hurried journey like this, and I am also excessively hungry and thirsty. The sun dips down quite suddenly behind a splendid confusion of clouds and mountain-tops, lights up the whole sky for a short while with translucent masses of crimson and amber, which fade swiftly away into strangest, tenderest tints of primrose and pale green, and then a flood of clear cold moonlight breaks over all, and bathes everything in a differing but equally beautiful radiance. Three ridges have now been climbed, and the pertinacious

guide only dips his hand twice more in answer to my peevish questions about the distance. Nay, he promises in wonderful Dutch and Kafir phraseology to show me the "Baas" house (whither we are bound) from the very next ridge. But what a climb it is, and what a panorama do we look down upon from the topmost crag before commencing the steep descent, this time through a bit of dense forest. It is all as distinct as day, and yet there is that soft ineffable veil of mystery and silence in which moonlight wraps everything. We look over immense tree-tops, over plains which seem endless beneath the film of evening mist creeping over them, to where the broad Umkomanzi rushes and roars amid great boulders and rocks, leaping every here and there over a crag down to a lower level of its wide and rocky bed. In places the fine river widens out into a mere, sleeping tranquilly in the moonlight, making great broad patches of shimmering silver amid the profound shadows cast by hill and forest. Beyond again are mountains, always mountains, and one day's more journey like this would take us into Adam Kop's land. As we look at it all now, it does indeed seem "a sleepy world of dreams," but in another moment we are amid the intense darkness of the forest path, stepping carefully down what resembles a stone ladder placed at an angle of 45°. Of course I am frightened, and of course my fright shows itself in crossness and incoherent reproaches. I feel as if I were slipping on my horse's neck, and so I am, I believe. But nobody will stop

and "take me off," which is what I earnestly entreat. Both my gentlemen retain unruffled good humour, and adjure me "not to think about it," coupled with assurances of being quite safe. I hear however a great deal of slipping and sliding and rolling of displaced rocks, even after these consoling announcements of safety and orders are given to each weary steed to "hold up," which are not at all reassuring. Somebody told us somewhere—it seems months ago, but it must have been early in the afternoon—that this particular and dreadful hill was only three-quarters of a mile from the Baas'; so you may imagine my mingled rage and disappointment at hearing that it was still rather more than three miles off. And three miles at this stage of the journey is equal to thirteen at an earlier date. It is wonderful how well the horses hold out. This last bit of road is almost flat, winding round the gentlest undulation possible, and it is as much as I can do to hold the chestnut, who has caught sight evidently of twinkling lights there under the lee of that great wooded cliff. No sound can ever be so delightful to a belated and wearied traveller as the bark of half a dozen dogs, and no greeting more grateful than their rough caresses, half menace and half play. But there is a much warmer and more cordial welcome waiting for us behind the "sako bono" of the dogs, and I find myself staggering about, as if the water I had been drinking so freely all day had been something much stronger, but on my feet at last in such a pretty sitting-room. Pictures, books, papers, all sorts of comforts

and conveniences, and—sight of joy—a tea-table all ready even to the teapot, which had been brought in when the dogs announced us. If I had even sixpence for every cup of tea I drank that evening, I should be a rich woman to the end of my days. As for the milk, deliciously fresh from the cow, it was only to be equalled by the cream, and you must have lived all these months in Natal before you can appreciate, as we did, the butter, which looked and tasted like butter, instead of the pale, salt, vapid compound, as much lard as anything else, for which we pay three-and-sixpence a pound in Maritzburg, and which has been costing six shillings in Port Elizabeth all this winter.

It is always a marvel to me, arriving at night at these out-of-the-way places which seem the very Ultima Thule of the habitable globe, *how* the furniture, the glass and china, the pictures and ornaments and books get there. How has anybody energy to think of transporting all these perishable articles over that road? Think of their jolting in a bullock waggon down that hill. One fancies if one lived here it must needs be a Robinson Crusoe existence, instead of which it was all as comfortable as possible, and if one did not remember the distance and the road and the country, one might be in England, except for the Kafir boys barefooted and white-garmented, something like choristers, who are gliding about with incessant relays of food for us famished ones. The sweet little golden-haired children, rosy and fresh as the bough of

apple blossoms they are playing with, the pretty chatelaine in her fresh *toilette*, all might have been taken up in a beneficent giant's finger and thumb and transported a moment ago from the heart of civilisation to this, its furthest extremity. As for sleep, "you must slumber in just such a bed," if you want to know what a good night's rest is, and then wake up as we did, with all memories of the long wearying day's journey clean blotted out, and nothing left but eagerness not to lose a moment of the lovely fresh and cool day before us. Even the sailing clouds are beautiful, and the shadows they cast over the steep mountains, the broad river, and the long dark belt of forest, are more beautiful still. Of course the "Bush" is the great novelty to us who have not seen a tree larger than a dozen years' growth, since we landed, and it is especially beautiful just now, for although, like all native forests, it is almost entirely evergreen (there is a more scientific word than that for it, isn't there?), still there are patches and tufts of fresh green coming out in delicate spring tints which show vividly against the sombre mass of foliage. But oh! I wish they had not such names! Handed down to us from our Dutch predecessors they must surely have got changed in some incomprehensible fashion, for what rhyme or reason, what sense or satire can there be in such a name as "Cannibal Stink-wood"?—applied too to a graceful, handsome tree whose bark gives out an aromatic though pungent perfume.

Before going to the Bush, however, we consider ourselves bound to go and look at the great saw-mill down by the Umkomanzi, where all these giant trees are divided and subdivided, cut into lengths of twenty feet, sawn into planks half a dozen at a time, and otherwise changed from forest kings to plain humdrum piles and posts and slabs for bridges, roof-trees, walls, and what not. There is the machinery at work, with just one ripple, as it were, of the rushing river turned aside by a little sluice and driving the great wheel round, setting all the mysterious pistons and levers moving up and down in their calm monotonous strength, doing all sorts of miraculous things in the most methodical, commonplace manner. The grass of the downs over which we walked had all the elasticity of tread of turf to our feet, but they ended abruptly in a sort of terrace under which ran a noisy, chattering brooklet in a vast hurry to reach the Umkomanzi over yonder. It is easy to scramble down among the tangle of ferns and reeds and across the boulders which this long dry winter has left bare and to strike one of the bushmen's paths without difficulty, and get into the heart of the forest before we allow ourselves to sit down and look around us. How wonderfully poetical and beautiful it all is! The tall, stately trees around us with their smooth, magnificent boles shooting up straight as a willow wand for sixty feet and more before putting forth their crown of leafy branches, the more diminutive undergrowth of gracefullest shrubs and plumy tufts of fern and

lovely wild flowers, violets, clematis, wood anemones, and hepaticas showing here and there a modest gleam of colour. But indeed the very mosses and lichens at our feet are a week's study, and so are the details of the delicate green tracery creeping close to the ground. The trees, the actual great forest-trees, are our delight, however, and we never weary of calling to each other to come and "look at this one," extemporising measuring lines from the endless green withes which hang in loops and festoons from the higher branches. Thirty feet round five feet from the ground is not an uncommon measurement, and it is half sad, half amusing to see how in an hour or so we too begin to look upon everything as timber, to call the most splendid trees "blocks" (the woodman's word), and to speculate and give opinions as to the best way of "felling" the beautiful stems. Up above our heads the foliage seems all interlaced and woven together by a perfect network of these monkey ropes, a stout and sturdy species of 'liane' such as I have seen swinging from West Indian forest trees. Here they are used as a sort of trapeze by the troops of baboons which live in these great woods, coming down in small armies when the mealies are ripe and carrying off, literally, arms full of cobs. The Kafirs dread the baboons more than anything else, and there is a regular, organised system of warfare between them, in which the baboons by no means get the worst. I heard a sickening story of how only last season, the Kafirs of a kraal close by, infuriated by

their losses, managed to catch an old baboon leader of his troop, and skinned him and let him go again into the woods. It is too horrible to think of such cruelty, and it seemed a blot upon the lovely idyllic scene around us. All the wild animals with which the bush was teeming until a very few years ago are gradually being driven further and further back into the highest part which has not yet been touched by axe or hatchet. There are still many kinds of buck, however—we saw three grazing just outside—besides other game. It must, not so long ago either, have been the quiet forest home of many a wild creature, for there are pits now to be seen, one of which we came across, with sharp stakes at the bottom, dug to trap elephants whose bones lie there to this day. Tigers also have been seen and panthers and leopards, but they grow scarcer every year. The aboriginal inhabitants of the border country beyond, the little bushmen, the lowest type of human creature, used to come down and hunt in great numbers, here in this very spot where we are sitting, and traces of their ingenious methods of snaring their prey are to be seen in many places.

As I sat there with the tinkle of the water in my ears, sole break in the "charmed silence," around, I could not make up my mind which was the most enchanting, to look up or down: up to where the tenderest tint of cobalt blue showed through the flicker of green leaves, nearly a hundred feet above us, and where a sudden terror among the birds drove

them in bright plumaged flight from bough to bough, or down on the ground among the delicious brown leaves and wonderful minutia of diminutive tendril and flower. Here and there were fallen crimson and yellow leaves, rivetting the eye for a moment by their vivid glow, or the young fronds of a rare fern over yonder are pushing up their curled horns of pale green. A month hence it will be all carpetted with wild flowers and the heaths will be spires of tiny bells. There is also a coarse but sweet grass growing luxuriantly, on which the cattle love to feed when all the herbage outside is parched and burned to the very root.

As I read over what I have written, I am filled with a deep disgust to perceive how impossible it has been for me to catch even the faintest reflection of the charm of that forest glade; how its subtle beauty is not, by any poor words of mine, to be transferred to paper; how its stillness and its life, its grandeur and its delicate prettinesses, the aroma of the freshly-cut logs, the chirrups of the cicalas, the twitter of the birds, all, all escape me. Yet I shall have failed indeed if I have not been able to convey to you that it was a delicious treat, and that I enjoyed every moment of it. *I* am only a woman, so I was content to sit there plaiting a crown of ferns and thinking how I should tell you all about it some day perhaps. My companions conversed together, and their talk was entirely about killing something. "Sport" they called it. How best they could get

a shot at those graceful bucks over yonder; what a pity the close season had begun, what partridges there were; when the wild ducks came down to that large mere shining in the distance, whether there were any wild pigeons; how far into the unexplored bush one must penetrate to get a shot at a panther, and so forth. It seemed a desecration to talk of taking life on such a heavenly morning, and I was glad when it all ended in a project of a fishing excursion after a late luncheon.

As we found we should be obliged to start early to-morrow morning, I decided to stay at home and rest this afternoon, and I did not regret my resolution, for it was very pleasant by the fire, and our beautiful morning turned into a raw, cold drizzle. But as the people about here say, it has really forgotten how to rain, and it is more like a Scotch mist than anything else. Whatever it may be called, it blots out mountain, and forest, and river, and causes the fishing excursion to turn into the dismallest failure. Next morning, too, when we start after breakfast, we are all glad of our waterproofs (what *should* I do without my Ulster?), and the ground is as slippery as though it had been soaped. Our farewells are made, and we declare that we have no need of our Kafir guide again, though I confess to misgivings as to how we are to find our road through so thick a mist. It has also been decided, for the sake of the horses, to take them only as far as Taylor's to-night and so break the journey. But the question is, shall we ever find

Taylor's—for it is a little off the track—and we cannot see five yards to our right hand or our left. We are obliged to go very slowly, and there are places, steep up or down hill, when in spite of precaution and picking out grass or stones to go over, our horses' feet fly from under them and we each in turn come down on the damp red clay in an awkward sprawl. However we do not disgrace ourselves by tumbling off, and my poor habit fares the worst, for the chestnut always seems to pick himself up, in some odd way, by its help, and the process is not beneficial to it. Eland's River is crossed early in the afternoon, and then, slippery or not, we are forced to push on, for it seems as though it intended to be pitchy dark by four o'clock, and the mist turns into a thick fine rain. At last, about half-past four, we hear on our left the joyful sounds of barking dogs and crowing cocks, and the horses of their own accord show a simultaneous desire to turn off the track, to which, with its guiding waggon wheels, we have so pertinaciously clung. If it be *not* Taylor's, if it turns out that these sounds come only from a Kafir kraal, then indeed I don't know what we shall do, for we can never find the track again. It is an anxious moment, and Taylor's is so small and so low that we are as likely as not to ride right over it, but no, there is a waggon, and behind the waggon and not much higher is a thatched roof, and under that thatched roof is warmth and food and shelter and a warm cordial welcome, all of which good things we are

enjoying in five minutes' time. As for the horses, they are rubbed down and put to stand in a warm shed with bedding up to their knees and a perfect orgie of mealies and green forage before them in boxes. Let us hope they enjoyed the contrast between indoors and out of doors as much as we did! At all events they were freshness itself next morning when we made another start, not quite so early, for only the lesser half of our long journey lay before us, and the flood of sunshine made it worth while to wait a little and let the soapy clay tracks have a chance of getting dry.

It was exquisite weather by nine o'clock, when, after a capital breakfast, we did start at last, and the well-washed hills had actually put on quite a spring-green tint since we passed them a couple of days ago, from yesterday's long-looked-for, much-wanted rain. I went through many anxieties, however, on that return journey, because my two companions, who were in the most tearing school-boy spirits, insisted on leaving the road with its guiding marks of waggon wheels, as well as every landmark to which I fondly clung, and taking me across country over hill and dale, through swampy hollows and over rocky goat-paths until I was quite bewildered and thoroughly incredulous as to where we should emerge. It is true that the dark crest of Swartz Kopf lay steadily to our left, just where it should be, but I invariably protested we were all wrong when I had any leisure or breath to do anything but "hold on with my eye-

lids" up and down hill. At last we climbed up one last hill-face, and there, below us, literally smiling in the sunshine, lay the pretty little Mission settlement of Edendale. We were exactly where we wanted to be, topographically speaking, but between us and Edendale the mountain dropped sheer down, it seemed to me, and naught but a goat-path was there. "Of course we are going to get off and lead our horses down," I fondly hope. No such thing. I can't very well get off by myself, for the precipice is so sheer that I should certainly drop down a hundred feet or so. F—— steadily declines to "take me off" and begins to slip and slither down the track on horseback; I feel my saddle getting into all sorts of odd positions and I believe I am seated on my horse's ears, although I lean back until my head touches his tail. It is really horrible. I get more and more cross every moment and scold F—— and reproach Mr. C—— furiously all the way down without eliciting the smallest sign of remorse from either. But it is very difficult to remain cross when once we have reached the foot of that cruel descent, for it was all inexpressibly lovely and calm and prosperous this beautiful spring morning. Everybody seemed busy and yet good-humoured. The little black children grinned and saluted on their way to school, the elders cried "Sako bono Inkose," as they looked up from their basket-plaiting and waggon-making. The mill-wheel turned merrily with a busy chatter inexpressibly cool and charming, and the numerous fowls and ducks cackled

and quacked, as they scuttled from under our horse's feet. We rode down the main street with its neat row of unburnt brick houses on either hand, across a little river, and so, under avenues of syringas whose heavy perfume filled the delicious air, out into the open country once more. It is nearly a dead level between this and Maritzburg and the road is in good order after the long winter drought, so we make the best of our way, and hardly draw rein until we are under the lee of the hill on which Fort Napier stands, where horses take breath once more, for an easy canter down the quiet, straight streets of the sleepy little Dutch town. Our cottage lies beyond it and across the river; but it is still early, hardly noon in fact, when we pull up at our own stable door with the horses every whit as fresh and in as good condition as when we started, yet they have been close upon 100 miles from first to last.

September 25.

I declare I have not said anything about the weather for a long time. I cannot finish more appropriately than by one of my little meteorological reports. The skies are trying to remember how to rain. We have every now and then a cold grey day—a day which is my particular delight, it is so like an English one. Then rain, more or less heavy, and an attempt at a thunderstorm. The intervening days are brightly glaring and exceedingly hot. Everything is bursting hurriedly and luxuriantly into

bloom. Every bough of my scraggy rose-bushes thickly covered with buds which blow into splendid roses after every shower. The young oaks are a mass of tender luxuriant green, and even the unpoetical blue gums try hard to assume a fresh spring tint. The fruit-trees look like large bouquets of pink blossom, and the loquot trees afford good sport in climbing and stone-throwing amid their cluster of yellow plums. On the veldt the lilies are pushing up their green sheaths and white or scarlet cups through the yet hard ground, and the black hill slopes are turning a vivid green, and the weeds are springing up in millions all over my field-like flower-beds. Spring is always lovely everywhere, but nowhere is it lovelier than in fair Natal!

THE END.

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